

ABSTRACT

GILES, CYNTHIA HICKS. Benefits of State Youth Council Membership as Perceived by Adult Advisors of North Carolina Youth Councils. (Under the direction of R. Dale Safrit.)

The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore possible benefits of the State Youth Council, as perceived by youth council advisors of both chartered and non-chartered youth councils in North Carolina. Twenty-seven youth council advisors participated in focus groups or telephone interviews using an eight-item interview schedule. Responses were tape-recorded, with the use of a journal, transcribed and analyzed using the constant comparative method.

Five resulting themes were identified: (1) youth council organizations' knowledge of the State Youth Council (SYC) and sponsored conferences (i.e., mini-grants, teambuilding, leadership and service, and the Youth Legislative Assembly); (2) the benefits organizations have gained from participating in SYC conferences; (3) reasons for the decline in participation by chartered youth councils; (4) opportunities to influence the increase of existing councils' attendance at State Youth Council conferences; (5) the role of the state coordinator to influence non-chartered councils to become chartered. The researcher concluded that although most non-chartered council advisors were not knowledgeable of these conferences, they were aware of the existence of the State Youth Council. The majority of youth council advisors expressed their concerns about improved awareness efforts to inform existing councils about State Youth Council conferences. However, most of the youth council advisors interviewed believed that the state coordinator should be proactive in inviting non-chartered councils and offering incentives for attending state conferences. Additionally, lack of funding, location of conferences, and the inability of councils to recruit and retain members contributed to the decline in participation. Finally, all of the participants interviewed indicated that youth councils gained benefits by

participating in conferences sponsored by the State Youth Council.

Benefits of State Youth Council Membership as Perceived
by Adult Advisors of North Carolina Youth Councils

by
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DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to my husband, Demetrius Wayne Giles and my children, Chadney Durell Giles, Elgin Wayne Giles, and Velencia Mae-Elizabeth Giles.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Across the country many mayors, governors, and legislatures have provided opportunities for youth to have a viable voice in their communities through the creation of youth councils: formal bodies made up of youth, typically ages 16-18, who advise high level decision makers and elected officials (Martin et al., 2007). As youth councils are growing in popularity, The National League of Cities (NLC) lists more than 140 local youth councils in 19 states and the District of Columbia. The Forum for Youth Investment (2007) found eight states with Youth councils that act in an advisory role to state policy makers. Three of these state councils were created by legislation: Maine (established 2002), New Mexico (established 2003), and Washington state (established 2005). The remaining five youth councils in Iowa, North Carolina, Nebraska, Arizona and Missouri were created through executive order. Of those five, North Carolina has the longest existing youth council, with 35 years of experience.

North Carolina's commitment to youth, and the belief that youth can and will advocate for themselves, began in the 1960's, and as this belief of youth solving their own problems became accepted, communities across the state began to replicate this concept (Lofquist, 1984).

During their adolescent years, teens spend more time with their peers without parental supervision (Youth Advocacy and Involvement Office, 1987). They can both be connected and independent as they begin to shed the images their parents have of them for identities of their own. While many parents help their teens to feel pride and confidence in their individual selves, peers are often more accepting of the feelings, thoughts, and actions associated with the teen's search for self-identity. The influence of peers, whether positive or negative, is of critical

importance in a teen's life. At best, peer pressure can mobilize a teen's energy, motivate him or her toward success, and encourage him or her to conform to healthy norms. Peers can and do act as positive role models; demonstrate appropriate social behaviors; and listen to, accept, and understand the frustrations, challenges, and concerns associated with being a teenager. The need for acceptance, approval, and belonging is vital during the teen years. Feelings of isolation or rejection by peers or family are likely reasons teens engage in risky behaviors. Thereby, peer pressure can impair good judgment and encourage risk-taking behavior and flirtation with danger. Such behaviors alienate the teen from family and other positive influences.

Loquist (1984) questioned whether young people who are mostly influenced by their peers, can possibly be expected to succeed if all they are ever shown are the failures of their peers? To avoid this self-fulfilling prophesy, it is important to put time, energy and money not only into advocating for positive conditions, but also into promoting programs that highlight the successes of young people.

Clearly, all young people need multiple opportunities to grow in positive, healthy ways (Eccles & Gootman, 2002). Youth need adults who teach an array of skills and values, help them set challenging and meaningful goals for the future, and nurture and encourage them. They also need specific, focused help to avoid specific obstacles that current popular culture places in their paths, such as the lures of drugs, alcohol, and sexual activity.

Communities are attempting to redesign themselves to become places that promote both positive behavior in youth and the general well-being of all young people while simultaneously preventing negative behavior (Villaruel et al., 2003). Although communities have begun to see the importance of addressing “positive youth development” (p.2), many communities have a limited understanding of the holistic community mobilization required to create an environment

that truly promotes positive development in all young people. Youth Development framework has captured the interest of civic leaders, policy makers, researchers and parents who are collectively interested in sustaining the quality of life and offering opportunities to community health for their future generations.

Engaging teens in meaningful leadership roles has become a major focus of many contemporary not-for-profit organizations (Safrit, 2002). Gone are the days when community-based organizations can use young people as recipients of services solely for the purpose of inflating operating costs to obtain funding. Today, with increasing levels of accountability for funds management, young people must be treated as valued and equal partners in holistic program development, implementation and evaluation. Safrit emphasized, however, that many not-for-profit administrators and program leaders often experience frustration and encounter unforeseen obstacles as they seek to design, implement and manage community based programs involving teens as partners and volunteers.

Background of the Problem

In response to racial tension in several communities, a group of youth in Greensboro, North Carolina, banded together to focus on positive solutions to the tension (Youth Advocacy and Involvement Office, 1973). Out of their discussion came a concern about the lack of youth involvement within North Carolina's communities. One solution was the establishment of an organization completely directed by youth. In 1962, the organization was recognized as the official voice of youth in Greensboro and adopted the name, The Greensboro Youth Council. As The Greensboro Youth Council began conducting programs of benefit to area young people, they expanded the Council concept to other cities in North Carolina. In December 1966, three Youth Councils, Greensboro, High Point, and Raleigh, united to form the Youth Councils of North Carolina, Inc. (YCNC). The objectives of the organization were effective in the other

cities as well because they were initiated, organized, and executed by youth. City councils in the perspective cities classified the Youth Councils under the direction of the executive director of municipal Parks and Recreation Departments. This provided an opportunity for interested youth and adults to work together to address community issues.

Soon, it became clear that a state organization composed of these collective youth councils would be beneficial not only to presently established councils, but also for establishing new councils in other areas of the State (Youth Advocacy and Involvement Office, 1987). The three councils assembled to establish guidelines, articles of incorporation, and bylaws for a closely structured corporation, which was the beginning of a new and different type of state youth organization. This resulted in the Youth Council of North Carolina.

During its first full year of existence the Youth Council of North Carolina's (YCNC), primary focus was defining the internal structure of the new organization (North Carolina Youth Advocacy and Involvement Office, 1973). With suggestions from youth, former State Senator Skipper Bowles and members of the North Carolina Federation of Women formulated the idea of legislation and effectively demonstrated to the North Carolina General Assembly the advantages in establishing youth councils around the state. As a result of a full year of lobbying, the Youth Council Act of 1969 was established (Lofquist, 1984). In 1973, the State Youth Council (SYC) was established and funded by the North Carolina General Assembly. The Council governs the implementation of youth programs by having a board of 10 members representing local councils that make decisions for the state organization. This grassroots method of operation has always been the unique and key element in the Council's success. The state organization does not direct the groups; rather, the local groups guide the state organization. The North Carolina General Assembly's appropriation of funds to an

organization completely directed by youth was the first of its kind in the nation and was just the beginning of youth advocacy in North Carolina. From 1973 to 1976, the SYC focused on developing its credibility as a state organization and building its membership. Approximately 25 local youth councils were organized and several annual statewide leadership development programs were implemented.

The State Youth Council coordinates local youth councils across the state by assisting newly organized councils, sponsoring four yearly youth leadership conferences (North Carolina Youth Advocacy and Involvement Office, 1973). Leadership conferences are planned and coordinated by Youth Council members with the assistance of an adult advisor. The following conferences are sponsored by SYC:

(1) Mini-Grant Conferences were initiated by the Youth Advisory Council in 1977. The mini-grants give youth an opportunity to develop program ideas, write grant proposals, screen grants submitted by youth groups, and implement defined program objectives. With an annual appropriation from the N.C. General Assembly and the N.C. Youth Endowment Fund, the Youth Advisory Council is able to award grants averaging \$500 for a wide range of youth-directed projects. Grant applications are received annually in the fall and awards made in the spring.

(2) The primary focus of Leadership and Service Conferences is to provide opportunities that enable young people to successfully complete developmental tasks. Youth attend seminars on public speaking and leadership skills, and participate in joint service projects. The goal is to educate young people about the importance of making a contribution to the community in which they live.

(3) The North Carolina Youth Legislative Assembly (YLA) is a three day mock legislative

session patterned after the North Carolina General Assembly, where high school students voice opinions, debate issues, and vote on matters concerning local, state and national government. At the conclusion of the session, students draft a final report to distribute to the governor and legislators. This unique educational experience is open to all North Carolina students in grades 9-12 who are interested in learning more about government and the legislative process.

(4) Teambuilding Conferences teach youth essential life skills such as cooperation, communication, and teamwork. These concepts are usually taught through adventure learning programs such as the Blue Ridge Assembly. Team-building programs demonstrate how groups function and how individuals contribute to group success. The dynamics of group processes are modeled through challenge course activities which create educational, motivating experiences with real impact.

According to the North Carolina Youth Advocacy and Involvement Office (1973), any organization wishing to receive charter into SYC is required to give a presentation at a meeting of the State Youth Council Board of Directors. The presentation describes both the activities and internal structure of the applying organization, and demonstrates that the organization is qualified for membership based on eight requirements:

- 1) The organization shall be composed of people who are of high school age;
- 2) The organization shall serve a town, community, or county unit of North Carolina;
- 3) The organization should be representative of the population in the area;
- 4) The organization should conduct programs that benefit youth, stimulate interest in matters of a civic nature, coordinate existing youth programs, and serve as a line of communication between youth and adults;
- 5) Any youth-oriented organization may be chartered at the discretion of the State Youth

council Board of Directors;

6) The organization must have an adult advisor;

7) Councils must have at least three projects, one in advanced planning and at least two in implementation or completed; and

8) Each organization shall have a set of by-laws.

A simple majority vote of the Board of Directors is needed to approve issuance of the membership charter (North Carolina Youth and Advocacy and Involvement Office, 1973).

There is a probation period, including the three state meetings, following the issuance of the membership charter. All charters are subject to review every two years by the Inter Relations Council, composed of one representative from each chartered youth council. The Council shall have full authority to determine its own policies, provided they meet State Youth Council charter requirements. A council may lose its charter under any one of the following two conditions: (1) the council revokes its charter; or (2) the council is not represented on the state level at three consecutive Board of Directors meetings. Inactive councils are reviewed every two years.

Conditional charters shall be granted at the discretion of the Board of Directors to any council not meeting all of the requirements for a conventional charter. Conditional chartered councils shall be allowed all privileges except that of voting and shall be reviewed at the beginning of each meeting. Any council meeting the requirements for full charter shall immediately receive voting privileges. Criteria for chartering youth councils have remained consistent since establishment.

Statement of Problem

Currently, the State Youth Council is composed of 19 chartered youth councils, although there are several existing youth councils/organizations that meet the criteria to become chartered, those organizations have displayed no interest in becoming part of SYC. Furthermore, during

the past 10 years, the number of youth councils becoming chartered in SYC and the number of participating councils at SYC conferences has decreased tremendously. According to McNabb (2002) researchers are encouraged in such instances to fall back on the tried and true practice of *triangulation*, validating the remaining archival records by using other sources. These include written records prepared by visitors from other cultures, biographies and histories, others' interpretation of the time, and, for phenomena in the not too distant past, the remembrances of participants in the events. Therefore, based on historical documentation and SYC directories provided by the Youth Advocacy and Involvement office, from 1970 to 1980 there were 50 chartered youth councils. From 1980 to 1990, the number of chartered youth councils in North Carolina was reduced to 24. Since the inception of the North Carolina State Youth Council, there have been no empirical studies to indicate why the participation of some councils and the chartering of new councils have declined.

Youth council advisors who are knowledgeable of a variety of community youth programs have the greatest impact upon the selection of programs for youth councils. The primary roles of the advisor are to assess the needs of the community and the needs of the youth; plan and implement a variety of diverse citywide programs for teens; serve as one-on-one advisor to teen projects; and evaluate projects, volunteers and program effectiveness.

Purpose and Objectives

The purpose of this research is to explore possible benefits of the State Youth Council, as perceived by youth council advisors of both chartered State Youth Councils and non-chartered youth councils in North Carolina. Specific research objectives include to investigate youth council advisors' perceptions of: (1) benefits of SYC membership for chartered youth councils that currently participate in SYC programs; (2) reasons members of non-chartered youth councils are not interested in becoming chartered; and (3) reasons for the decline in

participation by SYC organizational members.

Definitions of Terms

1. *Chartered Youth Council*- any youth organization that has met the criteria established by the State Youth Council (North Carolina Youth Advocacy and Involvement Office, 1987).
2. *Leadership*- an interactive conversation that pulls people toward becoming comfortable with the language of personal responsibility and commitment (Ango, 2005).
3. *Positive Youth Development*- promotes positive outcomes among youth, and it teaches the skills of active citizenship such as understanding how decisions are made and how to organize, plan, and communicate (Wisconsin 4-H Youth Development, 2007).
4. *Community Youth Development*- a perspective dedicated to advancing the field of youth work; addressing the needs of all youth, including displaced and vulnerable youth; and promoting healthy participatory communities through youth/adult partnerships (Youth Service America, 2007).
5. *Citizenship*- All persons born or naturalized in the United States, and subject to the jurisdiction thereof, are citizens of the United States and of the state wherein they reside. No state shall make or enforce any law which shall abridge the privileges or immunities of citizens of the United States; nor shall any state deprive any person of life, liberty, or property, without due process of law; nor deny to any person within its jurisdiction the equal protection of the laws. - XIV Amendment to the U.S. Constitution (U. S. Department of Homeland Security, 2007).
6. *Youth in Governance*- Youth and adults working together in positions of authority to make decisions and take action to strengthen organizations, communities, and our democratic society (Wisconsin 4-H Youth Development, 2007).

7. *Community Based Organizations*- organizations are most often nonprofit organizations—particularly service agencies—that are located in, and provide services to, neighborhoods and communities. Community organizations include parent-teacher organizations, sports clubs, church groups, block or neighborhood associations, 4-H clubs, and many others (Speer & Perkins, 2007).
8. *Non-profit Organization*- an organization that does not distribute profit (either dividends or capital gains) to its owners; it has no owners in the sense of the for-profit sector, and any income that exceeds expenses stays with the organization rather than following through to an owner or owners (Smith, Bucklin & Associates, 2002).
9. *Youth Development*- a process which prepares young people to meet the challenges of adolescence and adulthood through a coordinated, progressive series of activities and experiences which help them to become socially, morally, emotionally, physically and cognitively competent. Positive youth development addresses the broader developmental needs of youth, in contrast to deficit-based models which focus solely on youth problems (National Youth Development Information Center, 2007).
10. *Democracy*-a form of government in which participating citizens take much pride; it is a set of ideals toward which much of the world now earnestly strives. It is a way of pursuing objectives held in common and a process through which disputes may be resolved, at least temporarily, and action taken on matters of high controversy (Cohen, 1972).
11. *School-to-work*- programs that provide ways for students to transition successfully into the economy, either through paid employment with a business or self-employment. Numerous studies reveal that, upon high school graduation, many students who aren't

college-bound are neither prepared for nor connected to employment opportunities (On Purpose Associates, 2001).

12. Youth Activism- young people engaging in a practice that emphasizes direct vigorous action, especially in support of or opposition to one side of a controversial issue (Youth Service America, 2007).

13. Advocacy- an individual or group of individuals that become involved in making a case(s) in favor of a particular cause; attempts to influence the political climate, public perceptions, policy decisions, and funding (Advocates for Youth, 2007).

Limitations of the Study

The researcher recognizes the following limitations to this research:

1. Only youth council advisors were interviewed; therefore, results are based on the knowledge and experiences of adult respondents and not those of actual youth.
2. It is not known how many actual non-chartered youth councils exist in North Carolina; therefore, results cannot be generalized beyond the study population.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

This chapter reviews literature related to the establishment and variety of youth programs, and the possible benefits gained when participating in positive development programs. The literature is categorized into three areas: (1) community-based youth development, comprising of; leadership, citizenship, and youth advocacy; (2) youth councils: history, and purpose, and (3) North Carolina Youth Councils: Workforce Investment Act Youth Councils, and special focus youth council programs.

Community-based Youth Development

According to Armistead and Wexler (1997), early studies emphasized the role of young people as community change agents and highlighted how and why traditional community development organizations might involve young people. Ideally, youth development was recognized for building assets in youth mainly dealing with how and why communities should strengthen and channel youths' capacities. Many times youth are viewed as a potential for problems and not resources. This perception causes youth to be apprehensive and most importantly, miss opportunities to engage in programs that build skills and confidence.

Community programs for youth vary in many significant ways (Eccles & Gootman, 2002). A program may represent a number of elements and decisions that, together, constitute a program setting. Some of these dimensions represent choices made, such as the program focus, curriculum, and membership; others are not choices but the consequences of structural arrangements, organizational affiliations, local community issues, geographic location, funding, and political climate. Community programs exist in numerous forms: academic enrichment programs, community service organizations, and faith based youth groups.

Eccles and Gootman (2002) suggested that community programs for youth must

implement a list of the features of adolescents' daily settings and experiences that are known to promote positive youth development. Features for promoting positive youth developmental settings include: 1) physical and psychological safety: positive environments free from violence and unsafe health conditions; 2) appropriate structure: providing a controlled structure, where rules and expectations are clear, consistent, predictable, age appropriate, and enforced limits on behavior; 3) supportive relationships: that are secure, caring, responsive and communicative; 4) opportunities to belong: regardless of one's gender, sexual orientation, disabilities, integration of social inclusion or engagement; 5) positive social norms: rules of behavior; expectations; injunctions; values and morals; and obligations for service; 6) support for efficacy and mattering: opportunities for youth autonomy, responsibility, and challenges; 7) opportunities for skill building: resisting peer influence, focusing on cognitive, social and emotional skill development and positive parents-youth communications; and 8) integration of family; providing an environment that supports the integration of families, schools, and communities in youth programs. These eight features should be seen as a provisional list, subject to further study of the process or "active ingredients" that community programs could use to design programs likely to facilitate positive youth development. The implementation of these features needs to vary from program to program because they have diverse clientele and different constraints, resources, and goals.

Villaruel et al. (2003) suggested that the concept of community youth development is designed on the philosophy that communities must develop comprehensive and seamless community-wide efforts that promote positive youth development for all young people, providing them with the opportunities to develop positive relationships, skills, competencies, and attitudes that will assist them in making positive choices for their lives. More importantly, the

concept of community youth development raises the responsibility for adults, in collaboration with youth, to advocate for opportunities and structures that provide young people with sustained, positive relationships with adults and opportunities to use newly acquired skills in the real-world experiences of their communities.

Leadership

Many definitions for leadership suggest that it involves an influence process whereby intentional influence is exerted by the leader over followers (Kleon & Rinehart, 1998). It is difficult to determine a single definition, and depends on the objectives and purposes of the researcher. Leadership skills are essential for young people to feel a sense of satisfaction and contribute to society (Scheer & Safrit, 2001). By youth helping themselves and others to realize and achieve goals, they are able to meet the demands of life in adulthood.

Boyd (2001) believed that setting goals, solving problems, and making wise decisions are not just useful skills for leaders, but are necessary skills for leading a successful life. Combining experiential learning with the opportunity to put those skills into action appears to be an effective method for teaching leadership skills. The key to experimental activities being more than mere games to the students is in the effectiveness of the leadership abilities of the adults who work to guide them. Through community leadership, young people can channel their frustration with the status quo into social change

Woyach and Cox (1997) identified 12 principles that comprise effective leadership programs. The first five relate directly to the outcome or content of leadership programs, while the remaining seven address the process of leadership development. The 12 principles suggest that leadership programs should accomplish the following: 1) Help youth learn specific knowledge and skills related to leadership; 2) Enable youth to understand the history, values and

beliefs of their society; 3) Facilitate the development of individual strengths and leadership styles; 4) Facilitate the development of ethics, values and ethical reasoning; 5) Promote awareness, understanding, and tolerance of other people, cultures and societies; 6) Embody high expectations of, confidence in, and respect for the teens served; 7) Emphasize experiential learning and provide opportunities for genuine leadership; 8) Involve young people in service to others (to their community, their country and their world; 9) Facilitate self-reflection and processing of learning both individually and cooperatively; 10) Involve youth in collaborative experiences, teamwork and networking with peers; 11) Involve youth in significant relationships with mentors, positive role models, or other nurturing adults; and 12) Be developed around stated purposes and goals. Woyach and Cox states that few, if any, leadership programs can be expected to address all 12 principles, yet these principles represent a holistic, appropriate set of standards against which programs can be assessed.

Citizenship

“Citizenship in a diverse society means living with our deepest differences and committing ourselves to work for public policies that are in the best interest of all individuals, families, communities and our nation” (Haynes, 1998, p.11). Positive youth development concepts promote positive outcomes among youth. It teaches how to be an active citizen by providing understanding of how decisions are made and how to organize, plan, and communicate ideas. Society is strengthened when youth become informed and thoughtful citizens. Young people with skills, knowledge, commitment, and experience can contribute to the common good, become full members of their communities, and become involved in the political process.

Young people can be key agents for social change and economic development, yet are often excluded from full and effective participation in society. As citizens, young people should

be supported to enact their basic rights and responsibilities, as enshrined in the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights and 1989's Convention on the Rights of the Child (Youth Citizenship, 2007). Youth have a key role to play in the decision-making that affects their lives in local, national, international, social, economic and political development. A commitment to participation as a basic human right lies at the heart of youth citizenship, which seeks to empower young people with the skills, knowledge, and confidence to take charge of their lives and be active, responsible citizens.

A youth's perspective in the implementation and planning of youth services is beginning to be realized as a benefit to cities and states. Programs such as the North Carolina Youth Legislative Assembly (YLA) have given students an opportunity to learn about the legislative process and state government for 36 years (Youth Advocacy and Involvement Office, 2003). YLA also has a strong history of providing young men and women with the foundation they need to become involved in community service, appreciate diversity, communicate their ideas to others, draft, discuss and shepherd legislation through the legislative process. Another youth development initiative that engages young people in the development of policies and affairs is the youth in governance focus. Youth in government programs, youth on boards of directors, youth leadership training, or youth service-learning activities can also support progress toward the broader youth in governance vision (Wisconsin 4-H Youth Development, 2007). This vision supports the collaboration of youth and adults working together in positions of authority to make decisions and take action to strengthen organizations, communities, and our democratic society.

"Democracy Must Be Learned by Each Generation", is the motto for all Youth and Government programs in the United States (Young Men Christian Association, 2007). Started in New York in 1936, the Youth and Government program was the idea of Clement Duran, the

Boy's Work Secretary of the Albany YMCA. Duran felt that America was in need of better educated politicians with real character and integrity. He believed the way to provide such politicians were to establish programs for young people that would develop the desired character traits. His idea of model youth legislators continues to be the guiding idea in today's Youth and Government programs. Today, over 40 states and the District of Columbia have Youth and Government programs.

Teen Court is a legally binding alternative system of justice that offers young offenders an opportunity to make restitution for their offenses through educational classes, jury service, and community service, allowing them to avoid fines and sentences handed down by the criminal justice system. "Teens helping teens to take responsibility in the courtroom and beyond" (Godwin, 1996, p. 1). This alternative judicial system for high school students across the United States is a mock court that keeps first-time juvenile offenders off the streets. Real cases are tried and real consequences are given. A youth offender referred to Teen Court has his/her case argued by teenage prosecuting and defense attorneys before a jury of peers, consisting of youth volunteers from local high schools. The jury is composed of teens who determine each defendant's sentence based on the nature of the offense committed. Each offense is categorized into a particular class, which determines the number of community service hours to be given. Each defendant is also sentenced to serve a number of jury terms. Teen Court teaches lessons that last a lifetime.

In Missouri, the Governor's Youth Cabinet is a groundbreaking model for youth involvement that gives youth an opportunity to engage in policy making procedures (American Youth Policy Forum, 2003). The Youth Cabinet is composed of 45 members ranging in age from 17-22 years of age. Members of the Cabinet work with 19 Missouri State department directors

and function as senior public advisors with a goal of facilitating relationships and communication between youth and the Governor's office. While striving to engage youth across the state, the Youth Cabinet urges involvement on advocacy and service opportunities, as well as hearing the perspective of young people from diverse backgrounds in policy development.

In San Francisco, voters created a Youth Commission, where youth work with local government Board of Supervisors (American Youth Policy Forum, 2003). The 17 youth members, appointed by the Mayor and Board of Supervisors, advise government officials on issues related to bridging the gap between youth and government, and playing a vital role in ensuring that young people have a voice in decisions and policies that affect them.

There are some challenges associated with these groups. Little direct power is granted to youth, and members have to earn the trust of legislators to get them to pay attention to young voices. According to Haynes (1998), as we challenge students to apply the U.S. civic values to solving community problems, it is important to clarify what we mean by civic values. Civic values are the principles that guide both the government and the public life of the people. They define the rights and responsibilities of citizenship.

Youth Advocacy

Tolman and Pitman (2001, p. 36) stated that "Socially engaged young people have the knowledge that their actions can effect positive change. They possess an awareness and motivation about the need for positive change in their world that is based on knowledge. They have the skills and capacity to make a contribution. They are resourceful, connected and experienced; they know how to access and navigate their way through different settings and institution to find and create opportunities to be engaged in purposeful collective action that can lead to positive social change or improvement in conditions for themselves and others."

The North Carolina 4-H Youth Development Program holds a proven track record in teen advocacy and leadership development, and was a national leader during 2001 in mobilizing youth across the state to actively engage in local conversations as part of the national Centennial Conversation initiative (Safrit, 2002). Local conversations were conducted across the state between August and December 2001. Of the 100 counties and the Cherokee Reservation, 890 participated at the local level, engaging a total of 1297 youth, 118 adults and 72 community and elected officials.

As a part of state government, North Carolina has established youth advocacy groups committed to including youth in decision-making, the collaboration between adults and youth, as well as providing opportunities for leadership development. The Youth Advisory Council was formed with five core functions: to advise the youth councils of North Carolina; to encourage state and local councils to take active parts in government and civic affairs; to promote and participate in leadership and citizenship programs, and cooperate with other youth-oriented groups; to receive on behalf of the Department of Administration and recommend expenditure of gifts and grants from public and private donors; and to establish procedures for the election of its youth representatives by the State Youth Council (State Youth Advisory Council Act of 1975). The council protects local youth involvement by having, as its governing body, 10 members representing local councils on the board which makes the decisions for the organization. Then Governor Hunt, the State Youth Council and the Youth Advisory Council idealized the vision that the state would provide opportunities for youth to achieve their developmental task; recognize the positive contributions made by youth and view youth concerns with respect.

Also formed as an organization governed by the North Carolina Department of Administration is Students Against Destructive Decisions (SADD). The mission of SADD is to

provide students with the best prevention and intervention tools possible to assist in dealing with serious issues young adults face today (Students Against Destructive Decisions, 2007). Founded as Students Against Driving Drunk in 1981 in Wayland, Massachusetts, SADD expanded its mission and name in 1997 in response to requests from SADD students, and it continues to endorse a firm "No Use" message related to use of alcohol and other drugs. SADD is committed to empowering young people to lead, educate and advocate for the prevention initiatives in their schools and communities. The state of North Carolina's SADD program began in the fall of 1983 and now touches the lives of students in middle schools, high schools, colleges and universities. The need to establish more SADD chapters in our schools and local communities will continue as long as serious problems of drinking and driving, underage drinking, and destructive decision-making result from alcohol and other drug use.

Youth advocacy can fall into several contexts, depending on the issue(s) of the youth(s) involved. "Speaking Out Today While Making Change for Tomorrow" is the motto for Strong Able Youth Speaking Out (SaySo, 2007). SaySo is a statewide advocacy association of youth ages 14 to 24 who are, or have been in the out-of-home care system based in North Carolina. The association includes all types of substitute care, including foster care, group homes, and mental health placements. The mission of SaySo, Inc. is to work to improve the substitute care system by educating the community, speaking out about needed changes, and providing support to youth who are or have been in substitute care.

El Pueblo, Inc., another North Carolina non-profit statewide advocacy and public policy organization, that is dedicated to strengthening the Latino Community (El Pueblo, Inc., 2007). It's mission is accomplished through leadership development initiatives, proactive and direct advocacy education, and the promotion of cross-cultural understanding in partnerships at the

local, state, and national levels. El Pueblo has taken an educational approach to tobacco use prevention by helping Latino youth develop leadership and community organization skills, that they can apply to the issues they find important. The *No Fumo* (no fumes) Youth Leadership Program works with youth groups across the state to raise awareness about the dangers of tobacco use. Its goals are to prevent young people from picking up the habit and to promote cessation of tobacco use among youth. They also advocate smoke-free environments, and the elimination of health disparities associated with Latino-related tobacco use. The Youth program inherently advocates for the Latino youth through the implementation of the following goals: (1) Youth Empowerment-the programs to advocate for the Latino community by training a new generation of Latino youth leaders through mentoring, skill building exercises, critical awareness enhancement and development opportunities; (2) Health- program to provide tobacco prevention education and leadership skills development for Latino youth in North Carolina. The program seeks to change policies that will affect the entire Latino community by eliminating the health disparities caused by tobacco use; (3) Liaison-the Liaison program acts as a connection between Latino youth and the tobacco prevention movement as well as the educational, government and healthcare systems; (4) Technical Assistance-technical assistance works in conglomeration with numerous local adult leaders to effectively implement the No Fumo Curriculum. No Fume Curriculum program has developed materials and worked in conjunction with statewide advocates to provide resources and referrals as well as direct services to local youth; and (5) Capacity Building-through training to statewide leaders, offers programs such as: “Latino 101,” “5-A Health Trainings” and “Strategies to work with Latino Youth;” and (6) Direct Advocacy- program provides support on behalf of Latino youth, by addressing issues that affect their constituency. Their efforts extend to local prevention,

education and other youth related conferences, committees, coalitions and advisory boards.

In 1992, Wendy Lesko founded the Youth Activism Project, a non-partisan organization to encourage young people to speak up and pursue lasting solutions to problems they care deeply about (Youth Activism Project, 2007). With the motto “Kids should be seen and heard”, the Youth Activism Project seeks to: (1) Promote youth civic engagement, particularly in the areas of school policies, city ordinances, state laws, national legislation and international issues; (2) Provide free advice via e-mail and a toll-free hotline for young people to help transform their ideas into proposals that will be given impartial consideration by officials; (3) Train adults on how to collaborate and co-pilot successfully with young people; (4) Convince community, educational and government leaders to engage young people in meaningful roles and the decision-making process; (5) Share best practices and resources through a free e-newsletter, books and training manuals which highlight trends and promising practices; and (6) Serve as a network, connecting like-minded individuals who are tackling similar youth empowerment and public policy issues in the United States and abroad. Youth of all ages are finding the resources valuable in helping to assist them to become better self-advocates advocates for their issues.

Youth Councils

History

Until the beginning of the twentieth century, the teenager was closely linked to his home environment (North Carolina Youth Advocacy and Involvement Office, 1987). At home, young people learned the vast majority of ideals, values, and feelings about life. Whatever ideas teens developed that were different from his or her parents’ were not so radical that the parents could not understand them and adjust accordingly. With the turn of the century came technology and the break-up of the traditional family unit. Things once discussed only at home were now being broadcast everywhere except at home. Exposure to automation, industrialization, advanced

education and increased mobility gave young people the opportunity to explore the world, and to experience a new sense of freedom. Young people began to be influenced by many groups and situations other than those directly related to the home. They began to develop new ideas that were related to progress and the acceptance of the inventions of modern times. It was not until schools, churches, and companies involved with youth began to realize their influence on youth and the modern world. Adults and organizations began to promote and plan positive youth initiatives. However, adults planning programs for youth did not work because those programs did not meet the needs of the youth or the society. According to the North Carolina Youth Advocacy and Involvement Office (1973), there were two main reasons adult planned programs for youth failed. First, the primary purpose of the institutions involved was to pass along standards of life to youth. The school's first loyalty was to provide formal education, and the community's goal to make a better life for all. Therefore, part-time employees or volunteers with little understanding of youths' needs attempted planning for youth. As a result, the effectiveness of their work suffered. Second, young people continued to grow and expand their knowledge, and interests, and quickly grew out of the range of adult planning. Adults soon realized they had no way of planning for modern youth without including them. Out of this a new idea was born "peer psychology" or simply, "youth working with youth." This concept is based on the realization that young people are completely aware of the problems they are facing today, and are capable of dealing with their own peers. This psychology was then integrated into schools. Groups such as student councils, and service clubs, were allowed to organize and direct their own groups with the help of an adult advisor. The young people of these groups proved that planning for themselves was beneficial and accepted by their peers. This effort paved the way for the existence of youth councils.

The youth council, the epitome of peer psychology in action, carried this new approach into the community through an organization limited only in scope by the minds and abilities of the persons in the council (Youth Advocacy and Involvement Office, 1973). The youth council was organized to recognize and address the needs of modern youth, and is flexible enough to adapt to change, with the support of the adult advisor who serves to steer, guide, direct, and inspire its members.

Purpose

The primary purpose of local youth councils is to promote youth participation in programs affecting civic and governmental affairs (Local Youth Councils Act of 1975). The structure and roles of councils vary from city to city and state to state. In some cases they provide advice on proposed and pending legislation, state budget expenditures, and funding for youth programs. Youth councils promote youth involvement in policy making, advocacy, leadership, and in their community affairs.

Whether called a youth council, teen advisory council, or town youth commission, municipal youth councils demonstrate efforts by elected officials to civically engage their youngest citizens (Martin et al., 2007). Councils are great opportunities to give youth a voice and a chance to identify and solve community issues from their perspective. At the same time, youth councils are resources for elected officials to receive advice on issues where their decisions will directly affect young people. The benefits of youth participation go far beyond policy and issues; youth may be permitted to be involved in policymaking, the state's budget, and decisions regarding funding for programs to benefit them. To meet these needs, youth councils have five main goals:

- 1) To be the voice of youth in the community and serve as a liaison between youth and adults of the area.

- 2) To provide an organization in which youth can organize and supervise programs for the benefit of area youth and their community. These programs are open to all, and should not duplicate or overlap existing programs in the area. The object is not to compete with constituent groups, but to provide a central planning body.
- 3) To serve as an advisory committee on youth affairs to the local government. This goal is generally met by staying in touch with elected and governmental officials, bringing them ideas and concerns of youth that are within their district.
- 4) To provide an opportunity for youth to share in local government matters and to learn to become responsible citizens.
- 5) To encourage city planning agencies to invite youth to serve on city committees and contribute to community planning.

Membership

Many states have youth councils but, unfortunately, these groups are often comprised mostly of adults. According to the North Carolina Youth Advocacy and Involvement Office (1973), in North Carolina youth councils are comprised of youth who organize projects to benefit other youth. Adults provide assistance where needed.

Different youth councils have different ways of selecting members. Some have open enrollment, while others may have a selective application process community (North Carolina Youth Advocacy and Involvement Office, 1987). When structuring the enrollment process, the size of the group should be considered, and the chosen method should be clear, consistent, and sensitive to the needs of the community. In addition, the following points should be considered when selecting membership in youth councils: (1) the members of a youth council should be dedicated to the group; (2) a youth council is an open organization therefore, activities must be

open to any interested youth; (3) the size of the group should not affect its efficiency. Some youth councils have restrictions on the number of members. Communities may opt to establish individual membership restrictions; and (4) the councils are not restricted by ethnicity, gender, or religion. If multiple schools are involved, attention should also be given to balanced school representation.

Affiliation and Support

One distinction between a youth council and other youth groups is its affiliation with city and/or county governments. The North Carolina Youth Advocacy and Involvement Office (1987) strongly recommends that youth councils become affiliated with local governments. Affiliation with local government provides the following benefits: Youth councils are less likely to be confused with other youth groups; can be seen as a group that collaborates with and assists other groups, instead of a competitor; and may be seen as the voice of local youth, depending on the size of the area. In smaller areas, the government may simply provide an endorsement. In larger areas, the government may wish to sponsor a youth council by providing a full-time coordinator, office space, etc.

Youth council programs receive financial support from individual civic groups, corporations, foundations, and individual citizens (North Carolina Youth Advocacy and Involvement Office, 1987). A council may also undertake a venture designed to be self-supporting, such as an event supported through ticket sales. Members of youth councils learn the value of teamwork, respect for self and others, a strong work ethic, and citizenship. Youth councils can only be successful if they meet the need of modern youth, since the success or failure of projects and the organization itself is the responsibility of its members. This responsibility is quite heavy when one considers that the scope of the council is so large that a

failure will bring community-wide attention. The council also offers a needed challenge to find ways to present old ideas that must be passed along from generation to generation in the context that is acceptable to youth being served. It also offers a basic ingredient not present in any other youth organization of this scope today. Martin et al. (2007) suggested that there are six key elements to effective youth councils:

1. Determine council membership, size of the council, balance the representation of the members, determine a term length, consider the age range, recruit a diverse group, and connect with existing organizations for outreach.
2. Ensure a sound infrastructure, securing adequate, long-term funding, accurately assess funding needs, lock in out-year funding as much as possible, using multiple sources if needed, select an appropriate administrative home, weigh the benefits of housing the council inside or outside of government, connect to a coordinating body, rather than a single department, institutionalize the youth council so that it exist beyond changing administrations, and authorize the youth council to draft legislation.
3. Provide a supportive work environment, recruit and hire qualified staff; hire staff with both a youth development and policy background, find creative ways to bring in additional expertise; provide a dedicated space where members can work; plan (and budget) for face-to-face meetings; use technology to create real-time connections, and make sure that council members have a strong base "back home."
4. Build youth capacity, by providing skill building training for youth members; provide orientation and training for adults, identify authentic ways to integrate training into the council's work; make sure young people have the skills needed to complete the task at hand; provide informal coaching and support; create youth-adult teams; create

- a core team if necessary, and use work teams as capacity-building and workload sharing strategy.
5. Deepen youth motivation, by helping youth identify core issues; reconcile youth concerns with political realities; connect immediate issues to broader systemic challenges; make sure members complete homework; find creative ways to document broader youth opinions; help youth understand strategies for policy change; be sure youth know roles council can play; help youth leverage formal and informal access, and help youth understand that change takes time.
 6. Negotiate opportunities for access, by arranging authentic access to policy makers; cultivate ownership and accountability in the council by creating shared leadership opportunities between youth council members and policy maker; bring members into the policy making process and hire a youth liaison; facilitate concrete opportunities for the youth council to advise top officials; integrate youth council members into government departments and agendas by pairing them with state directors; commission the youth council to develop components of city and state plans; create a visible public presence; develop a communications plan; facilitate opportunities for youth council members to testify at public hearings; facilitate real connections to non-member youth constituents; be intentional about creating a “ripple effect”; convene the broader community of youth to discuss their issues and develop a policy agenda, connect the broader community of youth to resources and information, and link with other youth engagement strategies.

Tolman and Pittman (2001) claimed that it is easy to declare a youth council a success if it offers young people leadership, skill development, public speaking, and opportunities to travel

and interact with diverse groups of youth, and airtime with policy makers. However, Tolman and Pittman noted, “Efforts to lean too far toward individual development may run the risk of linking young people with purposeful but unimportant activities that keep them busy, but are not essential to long-term well-being of their organizations or their communities. Efforts that lean too far toward community development or social justice, however, run the risk of exploiting or excluding young people as programs struggle to maintain their pace and focus in the drive to achieve external goals” (p. 21-22).

North Carolina Youth Councils

The exact number of existing youth councils in North Carolina is currently unknown. The State Youth Council continues to conduct research to locate councils affiliated with local municipalities, as currently there are 19 youth councils affiliated with the state located in: Buncombe, Cabarrus, Catawba, Craven, Davie, Durham, Forsyth, Guilford, Iredell, Johnston, Nash, Transylvania, Wake, Wayne, and Wilson counties.

While it is a benefit for youth councils to be structured under local or state government other councils without such connections have demonstrated successful leadership initiatives. They have given youth the opportunity to participate and become involved in local government and community service, gain work experience, learn responsibility and accountability, develop a sense of confidence, and empowerment, and forge meaningful connections with other youth people and adults.

Work Force Investment Councils

The Workforce Investment Act (WIA) of 1998 requires Workforce Investment Boards (WIB) to establish Youth Councils as a subgroup focused on low-income youth at risk, ages 14-21, who face barriers to school completion (Brown, 1999). Youth councils present an opportunity to develop a comprehensive employment and training system that differs from

earlier efforts narrowly focused on job training. Funded at a total of \$1.0 billion, the program offers the possibility of new strategies for at-risk youth to combine summer work experiences with year-round activities in ways that introduce an academic component in the summer and year-round exposure to the world of work (Eccles & Gootman, 2002). The act was based on principles of youth development and involves mentoring, community service, leadership development, positive peer-centered activities, and long-term follow-up elements. Mandated by legislation, youth councils plan, coordinate, and oversee youth programs and services funded under the WIA (North Carolina Department of Labor, 2001). It provides a unique opportunity for the local community to create, through a common vision, a system of activities and services that enable youth to be successful in education and the workplace, and to become leaders in their community. Twenty-five Youth councils across North Carolina are working to establish local youth development systems and to make youth policy recommendations to local Workforce Development Boards. Upon WIB approval, the councils also recommend youth providers, award grants, and oversee and coordinate youth activities. The youth council is composed of 25 members selected based on their knowledge, experience and expertise in youth development, members represent the public and private sectors, education institutions, school-to-work programs, community based organizations, youth services, social services, business and industry, law enforcement, juvenile justice, and the NC Department of Labor Apprenticeship Program.

Callahan and Pines (1999) stated that “WIA presents an opportunity-perhaps one of the last opportunities we will have in the foreseeable future, to change the way federal resources are used at the local level. Simply continuing old patterns because other issues may preempt a full consideration of options would be lost opportunity. Delegating the responsibility to the youth councils to make youth policy decisions is a means for avoiding that mistake” (pp.21-22).

Specific Focus Youth Councils and Programs

There is a great diversity in the specific focus and character of community programs for youth (Eccles & Gootman, 2002). The purpose of the March of Dimes National Youth Council is to assist the organization in the design and implementation of programs targeted to youth (March of Dimes, 2006). National Youth Council members work closely with other volunteers, including members of the National Office of Volunteers, in the chapters to provide leadership and assistance in programs. In addition, National Youth Council members are involved with other national partners, advocacy initiatives, and the development of collegiate programs. The National Youth Council member assigned to a particular area assists in the development of youth programs within chapters and divisions, trains and assists youth leaders and adult advisors, troubleshoots youth program challenges within a chapter or division, advises youth groups on possible programs and activities, and serves on the local chapter or division board. In addition to the efforts mentioned, the National Youth Council is constantly developing new material for youth programs in order to increase the programs' and effectiveness across the country. Young people in colleges and universities who has demonstrated leadership and service abilities have been selected to work with the March of Dimes Birth Defects Foundation as representatives of the institutions of learning.

Founded in 1909, the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) has provided and trained more leaders for the black community than any other single organization (National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, 2007). Black American leaders, such as Thurgood Marshall, Ralph Bunche, and Patricia Harris, completed their apprenticeship in the NAACP's Youth Councils and College Chapters. The NAACP Youth Councils are structured under the Youth and College Division and are composed of five units:

Youth Councils-age 13 and under; persons under age 25; high school chapters; college chapters; and persons aged 21-25. Some of the primary foci for these councils are to provide interactive and entertaining instruction of the history of Africans in the diaspora (specifically the NAACP and the Civil Rights Movement), basic leadership development and community service, training and developing the skills necessary for leadership and activism, mobilization, and community education. While youth activities are an essential focus area for youth councils for youth under age 13 through high school, the focus for young adults is centered on training and fine-tuning intellectual and leadership skills that will heighten an increased level of social and political activism. The Youth and College Division of the NAACP boast a membership of over 400 youth councils and chapters on high school and college campuses. The division is one of the strongest components of this outreach arm of the NAACP. It continues to be a source for the NAACP's national volunteer network as well as the major training instrument for motivating youth to become committed to justice and equality for all people of color.

The development of leadership skills, educational achievements, and opportunities are goals established by the North Carolina Native American Youth Organization (NCNAYO). NCNAYO was established in June 1980 at the First Annual Indian Youth Unity Conference with for the primary purpose of promoting a sense of unity and cultural development for Indian youth in North Carolina (North Carolina Commission on Indian Affairs, 1980). An executive board comprised of 50 youth, ages 13-18 from across the state governs this non-profit, Native American organization. NCNAYO provides a forum for youth to voice concerns and discuss issues that affect them and their communities in which they live. In the organization, a youth representative sits on the board of directors for the North Carolina Commission of Indian Affairs,

the United Tribes of North Carolina, and two statewide Indian advocacy organizations. The North Carolina Commission of Indian Affairs acts as the advisory organization for NCNAYO.

CHAPTER 3

METHODS AND PROCEDURES

Research Design

The researcher developed qualitative methodology utilizing a grounded theory approach and an interview schedule to collect data. Qualitative data refers to some collection of words, symbols, pictures, or other nonnumeric records, materials, or artifacts that are collected by a researcher and that have relevance to a social group under study (McNabb, 2002). Qualitative data differs from quantitative research in several fundamental ways. For example: qualitative research designs, researchers must often interact with individuals in the groups they are studying; while quantitative researchers maintain a deliberate distance and objectivity from the study group, being careful to avoid making judgments about attitudes, perception, values, interaction or predispositions. Grounded theory researchers gather all possible facts pertaining to the problem through personal interviews, analysis of participants' diaries, and participant observation. While both are valid forms of research, qualitative data are "a source of well grounded, rich descriptions and explanations of processes in identifiable local context" (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p.1).

Population

The researcher utilized a convenience sample of 34 North Carolina youth council advisors. Contact information for advisors was obtained from the Youth Advocacy and Involvement Office in Raleigh, North Carolina. Nineteen advisors represented chartered councils of the State Youth Council (SYC), and 15 represented non-chartered youth councils.

Instrumentation

The researcher developed interview schedule based upon the research objectives and an exhaustive review of literature. The draft instrument consisted of open-ended questions

designed to allow respondents to provide in-depth responses in their own words. The instrument was pre-tested with a panel of six youth development experts consisting of the Director, a Youth Program Coordinator, and a Youth Advocate of the North Carolina Youth Advocacy and Involvement Office, a Wake County 4-H Agent, a Workforce Investment Act Program Coordinator, and a school age Youth Specialist (Appendix A). The panel was experienced in working with the target population and was asked to determine the question propriety for the study audience.

Suggestions and additions were considered, and the researcher made appropriate modifications. The edited instrument was pilot tested via e-mail with 10 adult members of the Governor's Youth Advisory Council to establish the instrumentation. The researcher used the results from the pilot test to modify the interview schedule for stimulating the highest quality response possible, ascertain relevance of questions, and estimate the average time required for its' completion. The final interview scheduled consisted of eight open-ended questions, with appropriate probes (Appendix B). Probes were used to deepen responses to questions, increase the richness of data obtained, and give an indication of the level of response desired (Patton, 1990).

Data Collection

The researcher contacted study participants via e-mail and invited them to participate in a focus group or telephone interview. The researcher conducted three focus groups, two groups consisted of five adult advisors, and one consisted of six adult advisors, representing 16 chartered State Youth Councils at the annual State Youth Council Conference, held in Cary, North Carolina on February 3, 2008. This conference is for chartered councils. Therefore, the researcher also conducted 11 non-chartered youth council telephone interviews at a convenient time for those advisors. Participants were informed of the purpose and use of information

obtained from the interviews. Descriptions of State Youth Council conferences and programs were included for non-chartered youth council advisors to review. With the participants' knowledge and consent, the researcher used a tape recorder along with a written journal to record impressions, reactions, and other significant events that occurred during data collection (Patton, 1990).

Data Analysis

According to McNabb (2002) the analysis of all qualitative data takes place in progression of six separate phases: (1) organize the data; (2) generate categories, themes, and patterns; (3) code the data; (4) apply the ideas, themes, and categories; (5) search for alternative explanations; and (6) write and present the report.

The researcher analyzed the study data using an inductive reasoning approach. In inductive reasoning, the researcher uses a set of established facts (research data) to draw a general conclusion, but the conclusion remains open to revision if new facts are discovered. The data was analyzed using the constant comparative method (multiple raters), described by Glaser and Strauss (1967). Unitizing and categorizing are two essential subprocesses used in this method, and consist of the following steps: (1) examining the data and organizing it into as many categories as necessary; (2) where possible, integrating categories and characteristics; (3) delineating major themes or theories; and (4) describing resulting major themes and their characteristics. As the process continues, categories are constantly reevaluated and changed when necessary McNabb (2002). Only when no additional revisions are intuitively possible does the analyst form a theory from the collected data analysis.

The researcher transcribed each tape recorded interview from the focus group, and data from the telephone interviews. Six individuals served as raters, including: a female Education Consultant, from the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction, a male Southern

Regional Team Manager from 4-H Youth Development /Wake County Human Services, a female Page program supervisor from the House Page Program at the North Carolina General Assembly, a male high school Guidance Counselor from Wake County Public Schools, a female Youth Mentor Professional from the Alternative Youth Center for Mental Health, and a male Youth Advocate from the Youth Advocacy and Involvement Office (Appendix E). The researcher provided the raters with copies of all transcribed interviews along with a copy of the interview schedule, a theme summary worksheet, and a letter explaining further details about the process (Appendix C).

Three raters read each transcribed interview, and three raters read each telephone interview and identified up to ten re-occurring themes. Raters submitted the initial recommended themes to the researcher. The researcher reviewed each recommendation from the raters and collapsed them into five resulting overall themes (Appendix D). The researcher shared these resulting overall themes with the raters. Each was asked to support, modify or reject them. All five overall themes were accepted, and no modifications were recommended from the raters.

CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS

Specific objectives of this study were to explore possible benefits of the State Youth Council (SYC) as perceived by youth council advisors of both chartered State Youth Councils and non-chartered youth councils in North Carolina through studying: (1) benefits of SYC membership for chartered youth councils that currently participate in SYC programs; (2) reasons members of non-chartered youth councils are not interested in becoming chartered; and (3) reasons for the decline in participation by SYC members.

Five major reoccurring themes emerged from the collected data including: (1) Youth council advisors' knowledge of the State Youth Council (SYC) and sponsored conferences; (2) The benefits youth councils have gained from participating in SYC conferences (e.s., mini-grants, teambuilding, leadership and service, Youth Legislative Assembly); (3) Reasons for the decline in participation in SYC conferences by chartered youth councils; (4) Opportunities to influence the increased attendance of existing councils at State Youth Council conferences; and (5) The role of the State Coordinator to influence non-chartered councils to become chartered. Table 4.1 illustrates the number of chartered and non-chartered youth council advisors who participated in the study.

Theme 1: Youth Council advisors' knowledge of the State Youth Council (SYC) and sponsored conferences (e. s., mini-grants, teambuilding, leadership and service, Youth Legislative Assembly).

Two issues formed the focus for this theme: (1) youth council advisors' knowledge of the SYC, and (2), youth council advisors' knowledge of SYC conferences

Table 4.1: Frequencies of Youth Council Advisors Identifying Issues Comprising Holistic Themes

Issue Comprising Identified Theme	No. (%) Indicating Theme	
	Chartered Councils (N = 16)	Non-chartered Councils (N = 11)
Theme 1: Youth council organizations’ knowledge of the State Youth Council (SYC) and sponsored conferences		
Issue: Youth council advisors’ knowledge of SYC	16 (100)	11 (100)
Issue: Youth council advisors’ knowledge of SYC conferences	16 (100)	8 (73)
Theme 2: The benefits organizations have gained from participating in SYC conferences		
Issue: Councils that have attended SYC conferences	16 (100)	11 (100)
Issue: How non-chartered youth council advisors felt their organization would benefit	N/A	11 (100)
Theme 3: Reasons for the decline in participation by chartered youth councils		
Issue: The lack of funding and the location of conferences	3-funding (19) 2-location (12)	4-funding (36) 9-location (82)
Issue: The inability to retain and/or recruit members	2 (12)	3 (19)
Issue: Conflicts with the State Youth Council calendar	4(36)	0
Issue: Results of participation during the past 24 months	15(94)	2 (12)
Theme 4: Opportunities to influence increased attendance of existing councils at State Youth Council conferences		
Issue: Providing opportunities for awareness	7 (44)	0
Issue: Publishing conference dates earlier	6 (37)	1 (9)
Issue: Increased communication between the state and the council	5 (31)	1 (9)
Theme 5: The role of the State Coordinator to influence non-chartered councils to become chartered		
Issue: Elaborating on the benefits	3 (19)	2 (12)
Issue: Inviting non-chartered councils to participate	4 (36)	4 (36)
Issue: Offering incentives to visiting councils	5 (31)	6 (37)

A. Youth council advisors’ knowledge of the SYC

All 11 non-chartered youth council advisor respondents (100%) indicated that they are knowledgeable of SYC. One respondent stated, “Yes. The state has been a vital source of

support, guidance, leadership, and exposure to our local council” (focus group I). A second respondent expressed, “Yes. I just recently heard about the State Youth Council through a newsletter from the League of Municipalities” (interview A1). A third respondent expressed, “Yes. We have attended the Youth Legislative Assembly” (interview C1). Three respondents pointed out that they were contacted by the state coordinator. Another respondent indicated, “Yes. Found information on state website” (interview F1). All chartered youth council advisors (100%) were knowledgeable about SYC conferences. One respondent pointed out, “Yes. My council is one of the first councils chartered under the state” (focus group I1). Nine of 27 (33%) respondents were knowledgeable because the SYC coordinator had contacted them.

B. Youth council advisors’ knowledge of SYC conferences

Eight of 11 respondents (73%) of non-chartered youth councils had attended at least one SYC conference. Six out of 11 respondents (54%) of non-chartered council advisors indicated that the state coordinator had given a presentation on conferences at their youth council meeting. Three of those 11 (27%) respondents expressed that they were not aware that the state offered conferences for youth councils. One respondent pointed out that they had received information from a “State Youth Council presentation and viewed information on the state’s website” (interview B2). All chartered youth council respondents interviewed were knowledgeable of SYC conferences. One respondent expressed, “My council has hosted eight conferences in the last 10 years” (focus group I1). Another responded, “Yes. My council has been involved since the 1970’s” (focus group II2)

Theme 2: The benefits youth councils have gained from participating in SYC conferences

This theme addresses the benefits gained by councils that have attended SYC conferences. Respondents who were not aware of SYC conferences were given a description of each

conference.

A. Councils that have attended SYC conferences

Generally all of the youth council advisors interviewed (100%) agreed that youth gained or will gain some type of benefit from attending SYC conferences. Four respondents expressed that councils have benefited by learning what other councils are doing across the state, taking those ideas back to their councils, and implementing them. Four respondents indicated that most benefits were gained by teens having the opportunity to network with other teens, and being taught Robert's Rules of Order and debate protocol at the NC Youth Legislative Assembly. One respondent pointed out that participating gave his/her youth a feeling of being a part of something that has impacted our state. Another respondent indicated that a benefit was the opportunity for networking among teens and adults. Respondents felt that the Youth Legislative Assembly conference motivated youth to share ideas, thoughts and opinions on issues. Several respondents indicated that benefits were gained by youth attending the Service Learning conferences because they were given the opportunity to participate in service projects and were exposed to diverse cultures and groups. One respondent stated, "The exposure of the variety of activities has helped our youth with planning local events" (focus group I 4G). Another respondent indicated, "An advantage to being affiliated with the state is because it gives support to local councils" (focus group I 4a). A third respondent expressed, "These conferences motivate youth ideas, set goals, and fill a niche not found elsewhere" (focus group II 4b). As one respondent pointed out, "I think they don't understand really what the benefits are and what can be derived from the state meetings, it's kind of a hard thing to explain. It's more of an understanding through doing and understanding from being involved than it is looking like it is inviting" (focus group I6e). The following comments were made by chartered youth council

advisors concerning the benefits gained: “The nature of conferences have changed, they have gotten better” (journal entry #1 IIa); SYC conferences have “changed since the 1980’s and youth gain beneficial experiences that they can take back and share with other council members” (journal entry #1 IIb); “Positive improvements have been made” to conferences (journal entry #1 IIc); “They are learning how to be citizens of our state” (journal entry #2 IIa); and “Keep educational aspects of conferences” (journal entry #2 IIb).

B. How non-chartered youth council advisors felt their organization would benefit

Upon a review of the conference descriptions, respondents from non-chartered councils were asked if they felt their youth councils would benefit from participating in SYC conferences. All 11 respondents (100%) replied they felt that their council’s members would benefit. Three respondents replied that since they lived in small towns their youth councils would benefit from leadership opportunities provided by SYC. One respondent replied, “Yes. My council will benefit by seeing what other councils are doing. I think this will help us to become more organized and structured, if we get to see how other councils operate” (interview A5). Another respondent stated, “Yes, We would like to become chartered and participate in other conferences. I think the conferences will give our council the opportunity to learn leadership skills and participate in more service projects” (interview C5). A third respondent indicated, “Yes. Our youth can learn the importance of giving back to the community and enhance their leadership skills, as well as provide opportunities for youth to interact with other youth” (interview E5). One respondent pointed out that they would definitely benefit from participation as the exposure would be “great” for their youth (interview A5b).

Theme 3: Reasons for the decline in participation in SYC conferences by chartered youth councils

This theme addresses the following issues: first, the lack of funding and the location of conferences; secondly, the inability to retain and/or recruit members; third, conflicts with the State Youth Council calendar; and fourth, results of participation during the past 24 months.

A. The lack of funding and the location of conferences

Three out of 16 (19%) chartered youth council advisors indicated that their participation was based solely on availability of funding. One respondent stated, “My council can only participate if approved by the city’s budget” (focus group I6b). Another respondent declared, “Involvement depends on how much money youth receive from fundraisers” (focus group I6d). A third respondent indicated, “Money is the biggest factor prohibiting our involvement” (focus group II6e). Four respondents from non-chartered youth councils indicated that they were not aware that their councils could attend SYC conferences. Four respondents replied that they were unable to attend conferences due to budget constraints. One respondent stated, “Parents can’t afford to pay registration fees” (interview I6c). Another responded, “We were not aware of the conferences, but I could see us having difficulty convincing the city to cover the expenses” (interview A6a). Only two respondent out of 16 (12%) chartered youth council advisors indicated that the distance of the conferences would be a reason for non-participation and responded, “Distance, membership and transportation issues” (focus group II6d). Another council had not participated, and responded, “No. We have not participated in the last 24 months because of the distance of the conferences and the transportation problems we have getting youth there” (focus group II3). Nine out of 11 (82%) non-chartered council advisors pointed out that they had issues with the location of the conferences. Two respondents indicated that the location of the conferences made it difficult for them to attend. Two respondents expressed a concern that youth would have to miss school to attend conferences. According to three respondents, the

“location of the conferences” (interview F8a, J8b) would increase the attendance. One responded, “The distance of the conferences makes it hard for us to attend” (interview F6a). Another respondent expressed, “Location, location, location” (interview H8a).

B. The inability to retain and/or recruit members

Two chartered council respondents expressed concerns about the inability to retain members. One stated, “Due to a merger, another non-profit group in the community now organizes our council. We lost members for different reasons, but the new organization is currently working to recruit more youth” (focus group II6c). The other respondent expressed that their council had “problems with recruiting youth who are committed” (focus group III6b). Three out of 11 (27%) non-chartered youth councils indicated that they are having problems with retaining members. One respondent expressed, “Getting youth to commit to attending” (interview C6b), as a reason for not participating. Another respondent expressed that their council had “unmotivated youth” and that they were “still in the process of getting organized” (interview B6a,b). Another respondent added, “We have gone a year with not much involvement from the youth” (interview A5a).

C. Conflicts with the State Youth Council calendar

Four chartered youth council advisors (25%) pointed out that the SYC conference calendar dates may cause conflicts with local youth council scheduled activities. As one respondent expressed, “Youth council local activities conflicted with the SYC calendar” (focus group II6b). Another respondent indicated, “September is the beginning of the school year and kids had to miss school to attend” (focus group II6c). A third respondent added, “The SYC calendar may conflict with schools and councils planned activities” (focus group II6h). Another respondent commented, “Calendar of events should be posted earlier” (journal entry #3 IId).

D. Results of participation during the past 24 months

Fifteen out of 16 (93%) chartered youth council advisors interviewed had participated at a State Youth Council conference during the past 24 months. Most of the respondents expressed that their council's participation was because of the opportunity for youth to interact with other students from across the state, exposure to diversity of participants, community involvement outreach, and leadership training. One respondent stated, "Yes. State conferences generate higher interest among youth" (focus group I3). A second respondent indicated, "Yes. In the last 24 months we have attended the mini-grants, teambuilding, and community services conferences"(focus group II3). "My council enjoyed all planned activities" (focus group II3). A third respondent added, "Yes. In the past 24 months we have attended the Youth Legislative Assembly" (focus group II3). Five out of 11(45%) non-chartered council advisors interviewed were not aware that local councils could attend State Youth Council conferences. Three respondents indicated that they were new councils. One respondent expressed, "No. We are not chartered and have not attended any conferences" (interview E3). A second respondent stated, "No. Our schedule is so hectic that we have not been able to commit to the dates" (interview F3). Two non-chartered councils had participated in the past 24 months. One stated, "Yes. We came as a visiting council two years ago" (interview J3). Another responded, "Yes. We attended the Youth Legislative Assembly only" (interview C3).

Theme 4: Opportunities to influence the increase of existing councils' attendance at State Youth Council conferences

Providing opportunities for awareness, publishing conference dates earlier, and increasing communications between the State Youth Council and local councils are the corresponding issues that addressed in this theme.

A. Providing opportunities for awareness

Seven respondents out of 16 (43%) chartered youth council advisors pointed out that there is a need for providing opportunities for awareness. One respondent suggested, “Video conference into other council meetings” (focus group I8a). A second respondent indicated, “Fundraising efforts to assist more councils to pay for conferences” (focus group II8b). Nevertheless, there was one respondent who suggested, “Need to put the council manual on the website” (focus group III8e). Another respondent expressed, “It is up to advisors to get their members to attend” (focus group III8f). A fifth respondent stated the need to “use the internet for publicity” (interview A8b), “promote on the internet” (interview I8a). Two respondents pointed out that a newsletter should be used to provide awareness to councils. One respondent suggested, “Councils should start a newsletter to inform local councils about conferences” (interview A8a). A second respondent suggested, “Youth should give testimonials on website” (journal entry #3 IIa) for councils to attend conferences, and a third suggested, “Marketing the conference on your website” (interview E8a) as a way to increase existing councils’ attendance at State Youth Council conferences.

B. Publishing conference dates earlier

Seven out of 27 (25%) youth council advisors expressed concerns about publishing SYC conference dates earlier. “Send press releases to other councils about upcoming conferences” (focus group I8c) suggested one respondent. Two respondents pointed out that conference dates should be put on the state’s website early. One respondent expressed, “Get those conference dates out on the website early” (focus group II8c). A second respondent added, “Councils that are hosting conferences choose their dates before the end of the school year so that information can be posted on the state’s website before the end of the school year” (focus group III 8g). A

third respondent suggested, “More publicity about the details of the conferences. A fourth respondent added, “All councils should plan around the SYC conferences” (interview J8a).

C. Increased communication between the SYC and local councils

Six youth council advisors (22%) out of 27 interviewed suggested that the communication between the State Youth Council and local councils could be increased by keeping the councils connected through sharing information. One respondent stated, “Influence councils to build relationships with nearby councils” (focus group I8b). A second respondent suggested, “Send out conference recaps to local councils” (focus group I8d). A third respondent added, “Figure out some way to do a fundraiser as a State Council, so we can raise big money” (focus group II8d). A fourth respondent suggested adding “advisor workshops with guest speakers at each conferences to share ideas, discuss struggles, etc.” (focus group III8c). A fifth respondent suggested using “website links to connect each town together” (focus group III8d), while another respondent declared “Do a little more marketing and getting the word out” (focus group I7h), as sixth respondent indicated. One respondent continued “More attention could be given to getting information out to small cities and towns” (interview D73).

Theme 5: The role of the State Coordinator to influence non-chartered councils to become chartered

Three issues formed the focus of this theme: first, elaborating on the benefits; secondly, inviting non-chartered councils to participate in SYC conferences. Offering incentives to visiting councils is the third corresponding issue discussed.

A. Elaborating on the benefits

Three chartered and two non-chartered respondents interviewed indicated that more emphasis needs to be placed on the benefits of becoming a member. One respondent expressed,

“Place more emphasis on opportunities for interaction with youth from across the state” (focus group I7d). A second respondent added, “Express promoting leadership opportunities” (focus group I7e). A third respondent suggested, “Spell out what some of the goals and objectives are” (focus group I7i). “This is a great opportunity for my council to meet youth from other councils and mesh with them” (focus group I7f) expressed by a fourth respondent. Another respondent pointed out, “A big thing among my youth council is knowing how great it looks when applying for college” (focus group II7g). One responded added, it’s the exploration of the experiences they gain” (focus group III7b). Another respondent suggested, “Create a blog for youth councils to elaborate on benefits” (journal entry #3 IIb).

B. Inviting non-chartered councils to participate in SYC conferences

One respondent indicated, “Send letters inviting non-chartered councils to participate” (interview E7b). Another respondent expressed, “Encourage chartered councils to invite non-chartered councils to participate” (interview B7b). A third respondent expressed, “Get them in touch with chartered councils” (interview B7a). As one respondent indicated explaining what “chartered” means is important to councils that don’t know what that entails (focus group II 7h), and another respondent declared, “Bringing SYC members to meetings to visit with non-chartered youth councils is a must” (interview J7a). One respondent suggested, “How to start a Youth Council should be put on the website” (journal entry #3 IIe). A second respondent commented, “Individual council websites should be linked to the state website” (journal entry #3 II f). “The State Coordinator should attend a workshop with City Managers” (journal entry #3 IIc), suggested a third respondent.

C. Offering incentives to visiting councils

The State Youth Council “needs to have incentives to join” it (focus group I7b). One

incentive suggested by a respondent was “Promoting that youth will gain community service hours” (interview H7a). Eleven out of 27 (40%) total respondents suggested that some type of financial incentive be given to visiting councils. “We come up with some type of funding source that if you express a desire to attend a conference, we can pay your councils for the first time” (focus group II8e). Another respondent stated, “Maybe if there were scholarship opportunities or some type of incentive” (focus group III8b). Two respondents suggested that new councils be provided scholarships to attend conferences, and one respondent suggested, “Defray the cost of visiting councils” (interview H8b). Another respondent replied, “Lower the cost of the conferences and provide scholarships for new councils to attend” (interview B8a), while another respondent suggested, “Defray the cost for visiting councils only” (interview H8b). One respondent stated “Invite more non-chartered councils to visit and observe at no cost” (interview C7a). A second responded, “Need to have more incentives, more benefits as a member, than as a non-member” (journal entry #1 II f), and third respondent agreed, “Use incentives to entice councils to join” (journal entry #2 II e).

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSIONS, IMPLICATIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusions

Based upon the study findings, the researcher has drawn the following conclusions:

Theme 1: Youth Council organizations' knowledge of the State Youth Council (SYC) and sponsored conferences (e. s., mini-grants, teambuilding, leadership and service, Youth Legislative Assembly).

According to results of this study, all 27 youth council advisors that participated in the research were knowledgeable of the State Youth Council. The study results suggest that most councils became knowledgeable by the following methods: (1) already chartered members; (2) previous contact with the State Coordinator; or (3) information found on the State website.

Some participants also indicated that information was obtained through the League of Municipalities, the City Manager, or the Mayor's Office.

Nevertheless, only three non-chartered youth council advisors were knowledgeable of the conferences sponsored by SYC. That data indicated that all chartered youth council advisors interviewed were knowledgeable of the conferences sponsored by SYC through prior participation, they had been contacted by the state coordinator, or they attended a presentation about the SYC. The researcher concluded that although most non-chartered council advisors were not knowledgeable of SYC conferences they were aware of the existence of the SYC, and therefore could be a reason why these councils had not attended any SYC conferences.

Theme 2: The benefits the organizations will gain from participating in State Youth Council Conferences

Fifteen out of 16 chartered council advisors in the study indicated that their councils had participated in SYC conferences. The data indicates that respondents believed that their youth

councils gained from participating in SYC conferences. Most benefits were gained from youth having the opportunity to be exposed to a diverse group of youth, network with other youth from across the state, and participate in leadership and community services initiatives.

Upon reading a description of the SYC conferences, all 11 of the non-chartered council advisors expressed that their organizations would benefit from conference participation because of the exposure they would gain from interacting with other youth. They further expressed that leadership and service learning opportunities would also be beneficial.

Based on the data from this study, the researcher concludes that the councils gained benefits by participating in conferences sponsored by the State Youth Council. The data indicated that both chartered and non-chartered youth council advisors expressed that SYC conferences provided an outlet for youth to interact with other youth, offered opportunities for youth to learn leadership skills, and exposed participants to service learning, and the importance of civic and community engagement.

Theme 3: Reasons for the decline in participation by chartered and non-chartered youth councils

The 27 youth council advisors expressed concerns that the decline in participation by chartered and non-chartered youth councils is attributable to a lack of funding and the location of conferences. Problems with the inability to retain and/or recruit members also contributed to the decline. Recognizing this decline, the data suggested that only one out of 16 chartered councils had not participated at SYC conferences in the past 24 months. However, only two out of 11 non-chartered councils interviewed had not participated in SYC conferences in the past 24 months, and the data indicated that these councils were not aware that they could attend. The researcher concludes that by bringing awareness to the SYC, and youth council advisors given

the opportunity to express their concerns about addressing these issues, should promote positive awareness and increase youth councils' participation.

Theme 4: Opportunities to influence the increase of existing councils' attendance at State Youth Council conferences

The majority of youth council advisors expressed concerns about improved awareness efforts to inform existing councils of SYC conferences. Concerns were expressed about publishing the conference calendar and other pertinent SYC information on the state's website. Participants felt that publishing the calendar earlier would aid councils when planning local activities as well as avoid scheduling conflicts with the SYC calendar. Furthermore, data indicated that respondents indicated a need to increase communication between the state coordinator and the youth councils. The researcher concluded that heightening the awareness by utilizing the Internet, publishing the conference calendar on the state's website earlier, and increasing communication, as suggested by research participants, may influence increased attendance of existing councils. This will allow councils to avoid scheduling activities on SYC conference dates.

Theme 5: The role of the State Coordinator to influence non-chartered councils to become chartered

The data suggested that most council advisors strongly agreed that the State Youth Council needs to put more emphasis on the benefits of becoming a member. The youth council advisors interviewed had mixed views on how councils should be invited to become chartered. Five indicated that chartered youth councils should invite non-chartered councils, while eight indicated that information should be disseminated on the state's website. The data suggest however, that the opportunity to become chartered should be offered by the State Coordinator.

Participants believed that the state has the best resources to promote the State Youth Council. Offering incentives such as scholarships, defraying the cost of visiting councils or inviting new councils to attend free of charge, were agreed upon by most participants as a method to entice councils to become chartered. The researcher concluded that it should be the state coordinator's role to influence non-chartered council to become chartered. By encouraging, supporting, and bringing awareness about SYC conferences to non-chartered councils, as well as, placing more emphasis on benefits and by providing incentives for joining may promote the participation in the SYC conferences.

Implications

Based upon the preceding conclusions, the researcher suggests the following implications for both the chartered youth council advisors and the non-chartered youth council advisors in the study.

Theme 1: Youth Council advisors' knowledge of the State Youth Council (SYC) and sponsored conferences (e. s., mini-grants, teambuilding, leadership and service, Youth Legislative Assembly).

Knowledgeable chartered youth councils of the State Youth Council have first-hand experience of the vast opportunities offered by this organization. The advisors of these councils should find creative ways to share their knowledge with existing councils. Where there are several councils in the same county, these councils should assist each other with projects and resources. The State Youth Council coordinates local youth councils across the state by assisting newly organized councils, sponsoring four youth leadership conferences annually (North Carolina Youth Advocacy and Involvement Office, 1973). Because of the chartered councils' prior participation at SYC conferences, they should encourage existing councils to participate by sharing their experiences gained from attending SYC conferences. Chartered youth councils

advisors should inform non-chartered youth council advisors about the source of support and guidance offered by the Youth Advocacy and Involvement Office. Awareness of SYC is essential to the success of the organization and is needed to sustain the membership of the councils. Chartered councils should create networks within the League of Municipalities to bring awareness to cities and town about the benefits youth gain from participating in local youth councils.

Theme 2: The benefits youth councils will gain from participating in State Youth Council Conferences

Any youth programs or organizations that promote positive youth development primarily benefit youth. Programs that provide exposure to diversity and networking between youth from across the state, offer youth opportunities to participate in service learning projects, and promote leadership initiatives should be commended. Not only should chartered youth councils have access to state sponsored initiatives, programs should be available to any youth organizations providing services to improve the quality of life of young people across the state. Youth councils should take advantage of programs that foster positive youth development concepts such as, leadership and teambuilding, service learning, and civic engagement. These concepts are supported at SYC conferences and are beneficial to the success of this organization.

Theme 3: Reasons for the decline in participation by chartered and non-chartered youth councils

Concerns need to be addressed to offset and reverse the decline in participation by chartered and non-chartered youth councils. Systematic efforts and initiatives should be developed and implemented to address funding and the location of conferences concerns. As local councils have jurisdiction over their program funding and budgets, these issues would have

to be addressed by their local administration. The Youth Advocacy and Involvement Office (state office) and chartered youth councils should develop and implement aggressive recruiting and retention programs that will entice more councils to join as well as continue their participation. Efforts should be made by the state office to communicate the criteria for attending SYC conferences to non-chartered councils to alleviate confusion about their participation.

Theme 4: Opportunities to influence the increase of existing councils' attendance at State Youth Council conferences

Councils being aware that the State Youth Council sponsors leadership conferences is vital to increasing attendance. The state office should increase communication with councils by utilizing state resources to bring awareness to existing councils about the opportunities SYC provides for youth involvement. Local councils have the opportunity to host SYC conferences in their communities and involve youth at all levels, from planning to the execution of the actual event. The SYC should communicate with councils about how the implementation of youth involvement is supported at conferences, and assisted by chartered councils utilizing their local resources to bring awareness to the SYC and sponsored conferences. Since local councils are located in various cities across the state of North Carolina, these youth attend, public schools (traditional/tracked schedules), private, or home school. It would be impossible to plan a calendar that will accommodate all councils' schedules. Therefore, by publishing the conference calendar earlier should allow councils to coordinate local activities with fewer scheduling conflicts.

Theme 5: The role of the State Coordinator to influence non-chartered councils to become chartered

Since the State Youth Council (SYC) is a state affiliated youth organization, the state

coordinator should have a larger role in influencing non-chartered councils to become chartered. It should be the role of the coordinator to promote, organize, implement, and oversee SYC sponsored conferences. The state office should serve as a resource for new councils and advisors as they transition into the organization. The SYC should develop workshop to advisors to help them understand the policies, procedures and expectations of chartered youth councils., as well as address the role of the state office and the coordinator. While emphasizing the benefits of joining SYC, the state office should be proactive in inviting non-chartered councils and offering incentives for attending SYC conferences.

Recommendations

The following recommendations are based upon study results, conclusions and implications:

- (1) Chartered youth councils should assist the state office to educate existing councils about the purpose of the State Youth Council (SYC). The researcher recommends that the State Coordinator work closely with existing councils to make sure these councils are knowledgeable of the resources (brochures, websites, presentations or pictures) available to provide information or insight about the SYC and the sponsored conferences.
- (2) The researcher recommends that the SYC emphasize the benefits that organizations will receive by being affiliated with the state; and involve youth members to express benefits they have received by participating at conferences.
- (3) The State Youth Council must actively develop recruitment and retention initiatives to enhance participation, and decrease the decline in participation of chartered and non-chartered youth councils. These efforts could start with one-to-one contacts made through the interaction of chartered councils visiting non-chartered councils. Involving the youth in this process is essential to the promotion of the programs. Funding efforts could start with applying for youth development grants, holding fundraisers and soliciting for corporate sponsorships. The SYC

should continuously change the location of the conferences to accommodate councils in remote cities and towns and work with chartered councils when planning conference dates. This will reduce issues of scheduling conflicts.

(4) The state office could use the following resources to bring awareness to existing councils: have the State Coordinator attend youth council meetings, contact the media to attend conferences and send out press releases, promote awareness of council's purpose via the state's website, update and publish the SYC calendar on the website, start a newsletter recapping conference events and video conference meetings to connect councils and promote awareness of conference activities. The state office and chartered councils could increase communication by having chartered youth councils inform the state office about local non-chartered councils and networking with those councils to bring awareness about the SYC. Chartered councils could also use their resources to collaborate with those councils on community-wide projects. Since the Internet has become the most widely used form of communication, youth councils could start an internet blog between councils to heighten the excitement of attending the conferences.

(5) As the state office works to influence non-chartered councils to become chartered, it is vital the state serve as a resource for new councils by disseminating pertinent information concerning policies, procedures, rules and expectations. The state office should emphasize that by joining youth councils youth will have the following benefits: opportunities to experience leadership development, involvement in service learning initiatives, and forums for youth to voice their opinions on issues. The state office should investigate the implementation of incentives such as scholarships, or defraying the cost of visiting councils or providing assistance to councils with transportation issues.

(6) Since the State Youth Council (SYC) is a state affiliated youth organization, the state should

have a role in influencing non-chartered councils to become chartered. It should be the role of the state office to promote, organize, implement, and oversee state sponsored conferences.

Recommendations for further research

- (1) The researcher recommends that quantitative research be conducted in follow up to this qualitative study exploring the youth participants' perceptions of the benefits of membership in programs. This quantitative research can be conducted to collect and analyze statistical data utilizing a survey or questionnaire constructed around relevant issues.
- (2) The researcher recommends that research be conducted to locate all of youth councils affiliated with municipalities in North Carolina. The League of Municipalities is an organization that provides resources to local cities/towns in North Carolina. This organization has published a directory that could serve as a resource for conducting an environmental scan to locate local youth councils.
- (3) The researcher recommends that further research be conducted to locate youth councils across the United States. This research would provide an opportunity for local youth organizations to see factual information concerning the variations of youth councils and how they impact youth across the country.
- (4) To conclude, the researcher recommends that further research be conducted on a national level to locate youth councils. Such research would provide an opportunity for youth development professionals to view the level of youth involvement initiatives in other countries.

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Appendices

Appendix A
List of Panel of Experts

Panel of Experts

Alan Dietch, Director
Youth Advocacy and Involvement Office
North Carolina Department of Administration
Raleigh, NC 27699

Harriett Southerland
Youth Advocacy and Involvement Office
North Carolina Department of Administration
Raleigh, NC 27699

Heather A. Tart
Extension Agent,
4-H Youth Development
North Carolina Cooperative Extension - Wake County Center
Raleigh, NC 27610

Martha Lowerance
Youth Advocacy and Involvement Office
North Carolina Department of Administration
Raleigh, NC 27699

Nikki Marshall, Coordinator
Youth Services
Capital Area Workforce Development Board
Raleigh, NC 27602

Tarsha W. Banister
School-Age Youth Specialist
Work Family Resource Center
Winston-Salem, NC 27701

Appendix B
Interview Schedule

Interview Schedule

Name of Youth Council(s)?

1. Are you knowledgeable of the State Youth Council?

Probe# 1. If yes, how?

Probe# 2. If no, (researcher will explain)

2. Are you knowledgeable of the conferences sponsored by the State Youth Council??

Probe# 1. If so, how?

Probe# 2. If no, (researcher will explain)

3. Has your organization participated in any State Youth Councils conferences during the last 24 months?

Probe# 1. If yes, why

Probe# 2. If no, why not

4. What are some of the benefits your council has gained from participating in State Youth Council conferences?

5. After given a description of the State Youth Council conferences. Do you feel that your organization will benefit from participation in SYC conferences?

Probe# 1. If yes, how?

Probe# 2. If no, why not?

6. Please give reasons why your organization is not currently participating in State Youth Council Conferences?

7. Briefly express any ideas or suggestions that you feel will influence existing Youth Councils to become chartered members?

8. Briefly express any ideas or suggestions that you feel will increase the attendance at conferences?

Additional Comments

Appendix C
Instructions to Raters

Date

1~

2~

Dear 3~:

Thank you for agreeing to serve as a reviewer for my research on the Perceived Benefits of the State Youth Council: North Carolina Youth Councils. I conducted 11 telephone interviews utilizing an interview schedule consisting of 8 questions with probes. I am providing you those interviews with a copy of the interview schedule.

First, I am requesting that you read each interview carefully and jot down notes regarding important points, ideas, or feelings shared by the individual responses. Next, upon reading each of the 11 interviews, please review your notes carefully and identify major themes or ideas that reoccur throughout the interviews. There is no required number of themes that should result; however, I am requesting that you record the number(s) of the interview (s) and question number (s) that you believe support, substantiate, or provide evidence for each theme you identify. I have prepared a worksheet to assist you (see attachment).

Please email your responses to me at Cynthia.giles@ncmail.net or fax to 420-1377, your findings to me by February 8th. I appreciate your time and prompt response. Please contact me if you have additional questions (wk) 798-5878 or (hm) 662-9438.

Again, thanks for your cooperation.

Sincerely,

Cynthia Giles
Graduate Student
Department of Curriculum and Instruction

Date

1~

2~

Dear 3~:

Thank you for agreeing to serve as reviewer for my research on the Perceived Benefits of the State Youth Council: North Carolina Youth Councils. I conducted three focus groups composed of 4-6 participants, utilizing an interview schedule consisting of 8 questions with probes. I am providing you transcripts of those interviews with a copy of the interview schedule.

First, I am requesting that you read each transcribed interview carefully and jot down notes regarding important points, ideas, or feelings shared by the individual responses. Next, upon reading each of the interviews, please review your notes carefully and identify major themes or ideas that reoccur throughout the interviews. There is no required number of themes that should result; however, I am requesting that you record the number(s) of the interview (s) and question number (s) that you believe support, substantiate, or provide evidence for each theme you identify. I have prepared a worksheet to assist you (see attachment).

Please email your responses to me at Cynthia.giles@ncmail.net or fax to 420-1377, your findings to me by February 8th. I appreciate your time and prompt response. Please contact me if you have additional questions (wk) 798-5878 or (hm) 662-9438.

Again, thanks for your cooperation.

Sincerely,

Cynthia Giles
Graduate Student
Department of Curriculum and Instruction

Appendix D

Initial and Final Resulting Themes and Corresponding Issues

1~
2~
3~
4~
5~
Dear 6~

I would like to thank you for taking time from your busy schedules to analyze the findings of my research on the Perceived Benefits of the State Youth Council: North Carolina Youth Councils. I have carefully read, reviewed and reread your individual themes and corresponding comments.

Based on your input, I would like to suggest your review of the following 5 overall themes and corresponding issues:

Theme 1: Youth council organizations' knowledge of the State Youth Council (SYC) and sponsored conferences (e. s., mini-grants, teambuilding, leadership and service, Youth Legislative Assembly).

(Councils became knowledgeable by various resources such as, the Internet, the state website, presentations, and/or the state coordinator).

Theme 2: The benefits the organizations will gain from participating in State Youth Council Conferences

(Benefits expressed by chartered councils that participated in the pass, and how non-chartered councils felt their organization would benefit).

Theme 3: Reasons for the decline in participation by chartered and non-chartered youth councils

(The lack of funding and the location of conferences; Problems with the inability to retain and/or recruit members; Conflicts with the SYC calendar; Participation during the past 24 months).

Theme 4: Opportunities to influence the increase of attendance of existing councils' attendance at the State Youth Council conferences

(Providing opportunities for awareness, publishing conference dates earlier, and increased communication between the state and the councils).

Theme 5: The role of the state to influence non-chartered councils to become chartered.

(Elaborating on the benefits, inviting non-chartered councils, and offering incentives to visiting councils).

Upon your completed review, please feel free to support, modify or reject themes and reply by e-mailing your responses with suggestions, changes or edits to Cynthia.giles@ncmail.net.

Thanks again for all your cooperation.

Cynthia Hicks Giles

Appendix E
List of Raters

List of Raters

Angela Pope-Lett
Business and Technology Applications Analyst
North Carolina Department of Public Instruction
Raleigh, NC, 27699

Charlenzo Belcher
Regional Team Manager
4-H Youth Development
Wake County Human Services
Raleigh, NC 27601

Bonnie Trivette
House Page Supervisor
North Carolina General Assembly
Raleigh, NC 27699

Fredrick Thomas
Guidance Counselor
East Millbrook Middle School
Raleigh, NC 27610

Jackie Davis
Youth Mentor
Alternative Youth Adventures Center
Durham, NC 27707

Jeffery Walston
Youth Advocate
North Carolina Youth Advocacy and Involvement Office
North Carolina Department of Administration
Raleigh, NC 27699

Appendix F

Telephone and Focus Group Transcribed Interviews

**Telephone Interviews
(Non-chartered youth councils)**

(Letters represent respondents)

Interview A

1. Yes. I just recently heard about the State Youth Council through a newsletter from the League of Municipalities.
2. No. Researcher explained

No. I was not aware that there was a state supported youth organization in North Carolina.
3. Omitted due to relevance of question.
4. Omitted due to relevance of question.
5. Yes. My council will benefit by seeing what other councils are doing. I think this will help us to become more organized and structured, if we get to see how other councils operate.
 - a. We have gone a year with not much involvement from the youth.
 - b. We would definitely benefit from participating; the exposure would be great for our youth.
6. Reasons for non participation:
 - a. We were not aware of conferences, but if we were, I could see us having difficulty convincing the city to cover the expenses.
 - b. Changes in administration would cause us to not participate, if we had no support.
7. Ideas and suggestions to influence existing councils to become chartered:
 - a. More information sent to local councils about the State Youth Council.
 - b. Spell out the benefits of joining.
8. Ideas and suggestions to increase conference attendance:
 - a. Councils could start a newsletter to inform local councils about conferences.
 - b. Use the Internet for publicity.

Interview B

1. Yes. The State Youth Council Coordinator attended our meeting and presented information.
2. Yes. State Youth Council presentation and I viewed information on the state's website.
3. No. We are a new council and we have no funding to travel to state conferences.
4. Have not participated
5. Yes. We are such a small town and our youth rarely get the opportunity to leave the area. They could use the exposure.
6. Reasons for non participation:
 - a. Unmotivated youth
 - b. Still getting organized
7. Ideas and suggestions to influence existing councils to become chartered:
 - a. Get them in contact with other chartered councils
 - b. Encourage chartered councils to invite non-chartered councils to participate.
8. Ideas and suggestions to increase conference attendance:
 - a. Lower the cost of the conferences and provide scholarship for new councils to attend.

Interview C

1. Yes. We have attended the NC Youth Legislative Assembly.
2. No. Researcher explained
3. Yes. YLA only.
4. They have learned how to debate bills and how to write bills. They meet new friend and established relationships with youth from across the state.
5. Yes. We would like to become chartered and participate in other conferences. I think the conferences will give our council the opportunity to learn leadership skills and participate in more service projects.
6. Reasons for non participation:
 - a. Budget constraints
 - b. Getting youth to commit to attending
7. Ideas and suggestions to influence existing councils to become chartered:
 - a. Invite more non-chartered councils to visit and observe at no cost.
8. Ideas and suggestions to increase conference attendance:
 - a. Provide scholarships to youth with hardships.

Interview D

1. Yes. Meeting with the State Coordinator
2. Yes. The SYC coordinator has attended several meetings to assist our youth council to become started.
3. No. We are a newly established youth council.
4. Omitted due to relevance of question.
5. Yes. Since we are small town, our youth could defiantly benefit from the leadership opportunities provided by SYC.
6. Reasons for non participation:
 - a. We are not chartered by hope to become in the near future.
7. Ideas and suggestions to influence existing councils to become chartered:
 - a. Awareness, I think a lot of councils are just not aware of SYC.
 - b. More attention could be given to getting information out to small cities and towns.
8. Ideas and suggestions to increase conference attendance:
 - a. Keeping councils connected through the internet
 - b. Idea sharing among councils
 - c. More publicity about the details of the conferences.

Interview E

1. Yes. We were contacted by the state office
2. Yes. The SYC sent me information via e-mail.
3. No. We are a not chartered and have not attended any conferences
4. Omitted due to relevance of question.
5. Yes. Our youth can learn the importance of giving back to the community and enhance their leadership skills, as well as provide opportunities for youth to interact with other youth.
6. Reasons for non participation:
 - a. I was not aware that not chartered youth councils could participate.
7. Ideas and suggestions to influence existing councils to become chartered:
 - a. Locate these councils and make them aware these programs exist. A lot of it is that they just don't know.
 - b. Send letters of invitations inviting non-chartered councils to participate.
8. Ideas and suggestions to increase conference attendance:
 - a. Marketing the conferences on your website
 - b. Offer incentives
 - c. Relocation of conferences

Interview F

1. Yes. Found information on state website.
2. Yes. Invited state coordinator to attend a youth council meeting. She gave a presentation on the SYC conferences.
3. No. Our schedule is so hectic that we have not been able to commit to the dates.
4. Omitted due to relevance of question.
5. Yes. Since we are small town, our youth could defiantly benefit from the leadership opportunities provided by SYC.
6. Reasons for non participation:
 - a. The distance of the conference makes s it hard for us to attend.
 - b. Youth would have to miss school.
 - c. Transportation issues.
7. Ideas and suggestions to influence existing councils to become chartered:
 - a. Relocate conference sites.
 - b. Express the benefits of no-chartered verses chartered.
8. Ideas and suggestions to increase conference attendance:
 - a. Cost
 - b. Location
 - c. Transportation

Interview G

1. Yes. Through the League's Youth Summit.
2. Yes. Coordinator gave a presentation on the SYC conferences at the Youth Summit.
3. No. We were not aware that we could attend.
4. Omitted due to relevance of question.
5. Yes. Our youth council has not traveled outside of the city.
6. Reasons for non participation:
 - a. Not aware
7. Ideas and suggestions to influence existing councils to become chartered:
 - a. Invite councils to attend conferences at no charge.
 - b. Market, market, market
 - c. Send information to all NC cities and towns.
8. Ideas and suggestions to increase conference attendance:
 - a. Location of conferences
 - b. Put conference calendar on website

Interview H

1. Yes. The City Manger's office.
2. Yes. I found information on the YAIO website
3. No. I did not know about it.
4. Omitted due to relevance of question.
5. Yes. Youth will have the opportunity to learn the importance of community service
6. Reasons for non participation:
 - a. Not aware
7. Ideas and suggestions to influence existing councils to become chartered:
 - a. Have incentives.
 - b. More publicity about programs
8. Ideas and suggestions to increase conference attendance:
 - a. Location, location, location
 - b. Defray the cost of visiting councils only.

Interview I

1. Yes. We are interested in becoming chartered
2. No. Researcher explained.
3. No. Not knowledgeable
4. Omitted due to relevance of question.
5. Yes. My council will benefit by the opportunities that the State Youth Council provide to youth.
6. Reasons for non participation:
 - a. Budget constrains would enable my council to participate
 - b. Other obligations to youth
 - c. Parents can't afford to pay registration fees
7. Ideas and suggestions to influence existing councils to become chartered:
 - a. Promoting that youth will get community service hours
 - b. Youth get to meet other youth from across the state
 - c. Youth have a say on the planning aspect.
8. Ideas and suggestions to increase conference attendance:
 - a. Promote on the Internet.
 - b. Generate a newsletter amongst the councils.
 - c. Invite non-chartered councils to attend.

Interview J

1. Yes. Contacted by the state.
2. Yes. State coordinator attended our youth council meeting and explained conferences.
3. Yes. We came as a visiting council 2 years ago.
4. Benefits:
 - a. Exposure to opportunities
 - b. Interaction with a diverse group of youth
 - c. Motivate youth to share ideas, thoughts and opinions on issues.
5. Yes. The vast opportunities for leadership.
6. Reasons for non participation:
 - a. Location.
 - b. Youth would have to miss school.
 - c. Funds
7. Ideas and suggestions to influence existing councils to become chartered:
 - a. Bringing SYC youth council members to meetings to visit with non-chartered youth councils is a must.
 - b. More information on the website
8. Ideas and suggestions to increase conference attendance:
 - a. All councils should plan around the SYC conferences.
 - b. Location
 - c. Keep the youth connected.

Interview K

1. Yes. Information from our Parks and Recreation Department. We are seeking charter with the State Youth Council.
2. Yes. We are planning to attend the Community Service Conference.
3. No. We are a newly formed council.
4. Have not participated.
5. Yes. It will be beneficial to our local council. As a new council we are in need of any support that is available. The idea of a youth council is new for our community. It is currently support and funded through our town. It was funded on a shoestring budget and the advisory position is temporary. The funding to operate the program may or may not be enough; but it is important that financial support is available for the advisory position. If the advisor is to be successful they must be knowledgeable. That knowledge can be better obtained through training via conferences and other like group settings
6. We are new as of June 2007. The coordinator for our youth council was hired October 2007. We will attend our first conference Feb. 1-3, 2008. We are not currently chartered. The goal is to become chartered in 2008.
7. Ideas and suggestions to increase conference attendance:
 - a. Local support for adult leaders by providing training at the local and state level.
 - b. Providing a mentor for new councils.
8. Ideas and suggestions to increase conference attendance:

Again, this will be my first conference. I want to attend to expose the youth and myself to what is happening across the State in Youth Councils

Transcribed Focus Group Interviews

Focus Group I (five respondents)

1. Yes. I am new advisor sought information on Youth Advocacy and Involvement website.
Yes. I learned through involvement with the Human Relations Office.
Yes. The state has been a vital source of support, guidance, leadership and exposure for local councils.
Yes. My youth council members learned about the State Youth Council by attending the North Carolina Youth Legislative Assembly.
Yes. My youth council is one of first councils chartered under the state.
2. Yes. My council has hosted eight conferences in the last ten years.
Yes. I obtained information from website.
Yes. We have hosted several conferences
Yes. My council attended a presentation at the North Carolina League of Municipalities Youth Summit.
Yes. My council has been involved since the 1970's.
3. Yes. State conferences generate higher interest among youth.
Yes. State conferences allow youth to find a passion for community leadership.
Yes. State conferences motivate youth to become involved in the community.
Yes. State conferences expose youth to diversity
Yes. It has given them exposure to other youth from across the state.
4. Benefits:
 - a. An advantage to being affiliated with the state is because it gives support to local councils.
 - b. Exposure for local councils.
 - c. Diversify youth views and provide great opportunities for involvement.

- d. Networking among teens and adults.
 - e. SYC provides great service opportunities for youth in this state.
 - f. The exposure of the variety of activities has helped our youth with planning local events.
5. Omitted due to relevance of question.
6. Reasons for non participation:
- a. My council is currently participating.
 - b. My council can only participate if approved by the cities budget.
 - c. My council is currently participating
 - d. Involvement depends on how much money youth receive from fundraisers.
 - e. I think they don't understand really what the benefits are and what can be derived from the state meetings and it's kind of a hard thing to explain. It's more of an understanding through doing and understanding from being involved than it is looking like it is inviting
7. Ideas and suggestions to influence existing councils to become chartered:
- a. Staff has to want to work with youth.
 - c. Need to have incentives for council to join.
 - d. Put more emphasis on the benefits as members than not.
 - e. Place more emphasis on opportunities for interaction with youth from across the state.
 - f. Express promoting leadership opportunities
 - g. Great Opportunity for my council to meet youth from other councils and mesh with them.
 - h.
 - i. Doing a little more of marketing and getting the word out.
 - j. Spell out what some of the goals and objectives are.
8. Ideas and suggestions to increase conference attendance:

- a. Video conference into other council meetings
- b. Influence councils to build relationships with nearby councils
- c. Send press releases to other council about upcoming conferences.
- d. Send out conference recaps to local councils

Focus Group II (five respondents)

1. Yes. Information was sent to my office from the Mayors office.
Yes. My youth council is one of first councils chartered under the state.
Yes. We became chartered in 2006.
Yes. We became chartered in the 1980's.
Yes. Contacted by the Youth Advocacy and Involvement Office
2. Yes. My council attended the North Carolina League of Municipalities Youth Summit.
Yes. My council has been involved since the 1970's.
Yes. We attended several conferences back in the early 90's.
Yes. My council participated in conferences, but due to the change in administration we have since reorganized the council. We are not structured as a non-profit council that receives some funding from the town.
Yes. My council co-hosted a conference.
3. Yes. Participating has exposed them to different cities in North Carolina.
Yes. In the last 24 months we have attended the mini-grants, teambuilding and community services conferences. My council enjoyed all the planned activities.
No. We have not participated in the last 24 months because of the distance of the conferences and the transportation problems we have with getting youth there.
Yes. We enjoy them. We enjoy meeting other councils.
4. Benefits:
 - e. Idea sharing to take back to their communities
 - f. These conferences motivate youth ideas, set goals, fills niche found elsewhere.
 - g. Promotes leadership and community service.
 - h. These conferences exposed our youth to difference youth outside of the city, and gave them the opportunity to exchange ideas and network.

- i. Knowledge of Robert's Rules of Order
 - j. Gained insight on how other councils operate and recruit members.
 - k. Chance to see the projects and talk to other students and take these ideas back to other youth that could not come.
 - l. Gives youth a chance to interact with a diverse group of youth from across the state that they may not necessarily be able to in their own city or town.
5. Omitted due to relevance of question.
6. Reasons for non-participation:
- a. Council can only participate if we have funds in the budget.
 - b. Youth council local activities conflicted with SYC calendar.
 - c. Due to a merger, another non-profit group in the community now organizes our council. We lost members for different reasons, but the new organization is currently working to recruit more youth
 - d. Distance, membership and transportation issues.
 - e. Money is the biggest factor prohibiting our involvement.
 - f. They learn a lot by watching how other councils do things.
 - g. Leadership experience, we had a couple of students serve on state boards.
 - h. The SYC calendar may conflict with school and councils 'planned activities.
7. Ideas and suggestions to influence existing councils to become chartered:
- a. More communications sent to City Managers Office.
 - b. Further participation
 - c. Learning new ideas
 - d. Opportunity to be exposed to diverse settings or youth.
 - e. Guidelines and benchmarks for interested councils on the state website.
 - f. Beef the website up

- g. A big thing among my youth council is knowing how great it looks when applying for college.
 - h. Explaining what chartered means is important to councils that don't know what that entails.
8. Ideas and suggestions to increase conference attendance:
- a. More inclusion to encourage youth councils to interact more.
 - b. Fundraising efforts to assistance more councils to pay for conferences.
 - c. Get those conferences dates out on the website early.
 - d. Figure out some way to do fundraisers as a State Council, so we can raise big money.
 - e. We come up with some type of funding source that if you express a desire to attend a conference, we can pay to your councils for the fist time.

Focus Group III (five respondents)

1. Yes. We became chartered in 1980's.
Yes. By research and notes associated with all of the e-mails from the state.
Yes. Through our community affairs department.
Yes. Kind of from the website.
Yes. Member since 2002.
2. Yes. We have attended several conferences.
Yes. We have attended in the past.
Yes. By attending conferences.
Yes. Website, State Coordinator, and attending the conferences.
Yes. We have participated and have done so the last 5 years.
3. Yes. In the last 24 months we have attended the Youth Legislative Assembly.
Yes. It gives students a chance to experience and interact with other youth council across the state.
Yes. To meet and interact with other members.
Yes. Connecting with other towns, leadership building, service, diversity interaction, civic engagement, and community outreach.
Yes. The opportunity to meet other students.
4. Benefits:
 - a. Great experience for youth.
 - b. Feeling apart of something that has impacted our state.
 - c. Debate protocol
 - d. They take back information on what other youth councils are doing and share with the larger groups.

- e. It gives them a fresh approach to how others are during.
 - f. Taken what they have learned and take it back to their own councils.
 - g. Learn more about colleges
 - h. Learn how to properly debate issues
 - i. Widen understanding of global issues
 - j. Opportunity to meet other people across the state leadership opportunities on the state level.
5. Yes. Energizes and inspires our team.
- Yes. We do participate and we do benefit.
6. Reasons for non-participation:
- a. Problems with retention
 - b. Problems with recruiting youth who are committed.
 - c. September is the beginning of the school year and kids had to miss school to attend.
7. Ideas and suggestions to influence existing councils to become chartered:
- a. Schedule by monthly advisors meetings to bring advisors together to exchange ideas.
 - b. It's the exploration of the experiences they gain.
 - c. Professional training for Advisors needed.
 - d. Include information on website
8. Ideas and suggestions to increase conference attendance:
- a. Ideas for retention and fundraising
 - b. Maybe if there were scholarship opportunities or some type of incentive.
 - c. Advisor workshops (guest speaker) at each conferences to share ideas, discuss struggles, etc.

- d. Website links connect each town together.
- e. Need to put Youth Council Manual on the website.
- f. That it is up to advisors to get their members to attend.
- g. Councils that are hosting conferences choose their dates before the end of the school year so that information can be posted on the state's website before the end of the school year.

Appendix G

Focus Group Journal Entries

Journal Entry Notes

Focus Group I/Journal entry #1

I. Researcher observed the following:

- a. Participants excited to answer questions.
- b. Participants prepared for interview, i.e. prepared notes, and information about their councils.
- c. Participants seemed happy that the researcher choose this topic for study.

II. Comments:

- a. The nature of conferences have changed, they have gotten better.
- b. Changed since the 1980's and youth gain beneficial experiences that they can take back and share with other council members.
- c. Positive improvements have been made to SYC.
- d. Programs and conferences are well organized by local councils.
- e. Youth seem to follow rules and less complaints about the accommodations.
- f. Need to have incentives more benefits as member, than not a member.
- g. All advisors were in agreement that more information should be put on the state's website.
- h. I think the State Coordinator has done a great job getting the message out about what the SYC is.

Focus Group I/Journal entry #2

I. Researcher observed the following:

- a. Participants had asked great deal of questions about the study being conducted.
- b. Participants seemed happy that the researcher choose this topic of study.
- c. Two participants lead the discussion.
- d. Focus group ended before 20 minutes

II. Comments:

- a. They are learning how to be citizens of our state.
- b. Keeping educational aspects of conferences.
- c. Revamp application process.
- d. Have youth to revisit charter requirements for councils.
- e. Use incentives to entice councils to join.
- f. Keeping website updated is a must.

Focus Group II /Journal entry #3

I. Researcher observed the following:

- a. Researcher talked a great deal to get participants engaged in discussion..
- b. Participants from deviated a great deal from research questions.
- c. Several participants talking at the same time.
- d. Researcher had difficulty capturing correct responses.

II. Comments:

- a. Youth should give testimonials on website.
- b. Create a blob for youth councils to elaborate the benefits
- c. State coordinator should attend a workshop with City Mangers.
- d. Calendar of events should be posted earlier.
- e. How to start a Youth Council should be put on the website.
- f. Individual council's website linked to state website.